

# KOINONIA



## *The Journal of the Anglican & Eastern Churches Association*

Cover Illustration:

Detail of window, All Saints, Bishop Burton

New Series No. 61, Eastertide/Pentecost 2013  
ISSN No. 0012-8732

THE ANGLICAN & EASTERN  
CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

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# *Koinonia*

THE JOURNAL OF THE ANGLICAN &  
EASTERN CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

## Editorial

*Come Holy Ghost*

*Our souls inspire*

*And enlighten with celestial fire*

*Thou the anointing Spirit art*

*Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.*

SO BEGINS the ancient Veni Creator hymn, the invocation of the Holy Spirit. This issue of Koinonia comes out in Eastertide for Orthodox Christians and shortly after Pentecost for Western Christians. At this time of liturgical division it must be our continued prayer that the Spirit who leads us into all truth may also lead us into all unity.

The articles in this edition reflect that will and effort towards greater mutual understanding in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The main article, by Jennifer Totney explores the ecclesiology of George Herbert. His poetry reveals a vision of the Church in which worship unites Christians on earth and in heaven. Although Herbert is often described as being quintessentially Anglican, the deep spirituality of his poetry has an appeal that transcends ecclesial boundaries. Readers may find it useful to have a copy of Herbert's collected works to refer to the poems referenced in the text which it has not been possible to include in full.

As you may already know, the AECA actively promotes Anglican-Orthodox dialogue and understanding through the financial support of study and research. In order to publicise the funding opportunities

available from the AECA and other sources such as the Philip Usher Memorial Fund, I will include at least one article from recipients of these grants in all future editions of Koinonia. In this issue, Nevsky Everett, whose work has been received support from both of these sources, discusses the complex ideological and practical challenges facing Syrian Orthodox Christians in contemporary Turkey. Further information about grants is included in News and Notices.

If you have ever visited Walsingham you may have visited Saint Seraphim's Chapel, a former railway station ticket office that was converted into a Russian Orthodox Chapel in the 1960's. The article by Sylvia Batchelor describes the fascinating history of this chapel and the current efforts to save and secure it for the future. By publicising the project here, it is my hope that England's Nazareth may continue to be a place where Christian unity is focused around the Mother of God.

James Buxton has written the second in our practical series of travel guides to Orthodox countries, with an article on Ethiopia, a country he has visited numerous times, with a unique Christian culture. If there is anywhere in particular you would like to be featured in future, do get in touch. There is an excellent review of two books about Orthodox liturgy by Dimitris Salapatas. Again, if there are any books in particular that you would like to recommend for review, do not hesitate to contact me.

Finally, our prayers have been asked for the two kidnapped Syrian bishops whose whereabouts and wellbeing are unknown at the time of going to print. We are united in prayer for them and for all the Syrian people, and just a few weeks ago Archbishops Justin Welby and Vincent Nichols offered their heartfelt prayers for their safe return and for a conclusion to the violence taking place in Syria. I feel it is important to include their statement in full:

*"Since the very first days of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, we have prayed as we watched in horror and sorrow the escalating violence that has rent this country apart. We have grieved with all*

*Syrians – with the families of each and every human life lost and with all communities whose neighbourhoods and livelihoods have suffered from escalating and pervasive violence.*

*And today, our prayers also go with the ancient communities of our Christian brothers and sisters in Syria. The kidnapping this week of two Metropolitan bishops of Aleppo, Mar Gregorios Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church and Paul Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, and the killing of their driver while they were carrying out a humanitarian mission, is another telling sign of the terrible circumstances that continue to engulf all Syrians.*

*We unreservedly support these Christian communities, rooted in and attached to the biblical lands, despite the many hardships. We respond to the call from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, and the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, urging churches worldwide to remain steadfast in the face of challenging realities and to bear witness to their faith in the power of love in this world.*

*We both continue to pray for a political solution to this tragic conflict that would stem the terrible violence and also empower all Syrians with their fundamental and inalienable freedoms. We also call for urgent humanitarian aid to reach all who are suffering. We pray that Syria can recapture its tradition of tolerance, rooted in faith and respect for faiths living side by side."*

May the Holy Spirit the Comforter renew the face of the earth, transform our hearts and minds, bringing peace and unity to a humanity shattered by evil and sin.



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SYLVIA BATCHELOR is Russian Orthodox and a trustee of St Seraphim's Chapel, Walsingham which she has supported for over thirty five years. She now manages the major restoration project.

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DIMITRIS SALAPATAS has studied Theology and Byzantine Music in Athens, International Relations at the University of London and is currently undertaking research on the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius at the University of Winchester.

## News & Notices

### *New Anglican Patron*

The Chair and Executive Committee of AECA are delighted to announce that Archbishop Justin Welby has kindly agreed to succeed Rowan Williams as the Anglican Patron of the AECA.

### *Facebook Group*

Readers of Koinonia who use Facebook might like to know that there is now an AECA Facebook group where you can find links to a wide variety of sources and events for Anglican and Orthodox interaction. Search for 'Anglican and Eastern Churches Association'. Please join the group and contribute to the discussions taking place and the material available.

### *Pilgrimage 2013*

Istanbul and the Aegean Coast, 2-10 October with Trevor Willmott, Bishop of Dover. A pilgrimage to some of the Seven Churches of Revelation complemented with three nights in Istanbul and a visit to Gallipoli and Troy. For a detailed brochure with full itinerary and information about costs, practicalities and how to book, please contact the Pilgrimage Secretary, the Rev'd Andrei Petrine using the details on the inside back cover.

### *Relocation of the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies*

The Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies (IOCS) in Cambridge has now relocated from Wesley House to its permanent new home at 25-27 High Street, Chesterton, CB4 1ND. It is about ten minutes walk from the

centre of the city. Many best wishes and prayers to the IOCS as they settle into their new home and continue their important work.

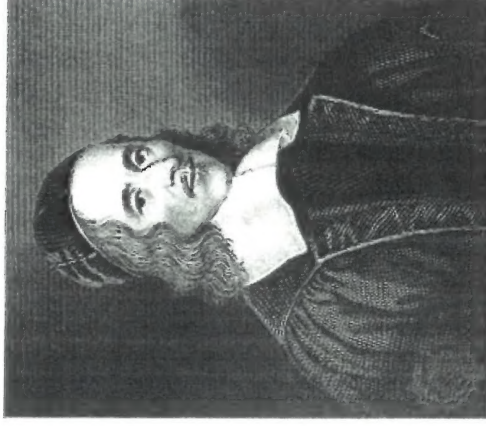
### *The Philip Usher Memorial Fund and AECA grants*

This Philip Usher Memorial Fund exists to promote the study of any aspect of Orthodoxy in situ by Anglican ordinands. Set up in memory of the Rev'd Philip Usher, who was killed on active service in Second World War, the Fund has sponsored generations of Anglican ordinands in acquiring a better knowledge of Orthodoxy, generally in a majority Orthodox environment. Longer, rather than shorter, periods of study are preferred. More information can be found at the new website: [www.philipusherfund.org.uk](http://www.philipusherfund.org.uk).

The AECA also administers grants and applications are regularly considered throughout the year. Please read carefully the association's aims and objectives on the website ([www.aeca.org.uk](http://www.aeca.org.uk)) and download the application form.

## The Ecclesiology of George Herbert's Poetry in *The Temple*

JENNIFER TOTNEY



### *Introduction*

THE UNDERSTANDING and exploration of the meaning and significance of the Church in theology has taken many forms. During the life of George Herbert the Church of England underwent many discussions, conflicts and changes. Although hints of this disruption can be found in his poetry, his focus is not on denominational disputes or identity. Despite many attempts to locate Herbert either within the Catholic or Protestant tradition, the vision of the Church which emerges from *The Temple* transcends such distinctions. The work of Lewalski, Martz and Tuve are significant in highlighting the various historical and liturgical

influences on Herbert's poetry.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the focus on ecclesiastical allegiance obscures the more profound and theological image of the Church that Herbert creates. Herbert's concerns are not primarily ecclesiastical but ecclesiological; his poetry seeks to build a temple that "these stones to praise thee may not cease" ("Altar" l. 14). In doing so, Herbert explores the nature of this temple and the significance of the worship that is offered within it. The structure he creates unites the diverse voices of the private spiritual journey within the community of faith and holds out the hope of the final fulfilment of all worship.

The placement of the poetry within a collection entitled *The Temple* invites an ecclesiological interpretation. Herbert's poetry is centred on humanity's relationship to God expressed through prayer and worship, but this relationship is not an individual or private one. In the cycle of daily prayer and the liturgical year the worshipper is drawn into a cyclic interaction between personal devotion and corporate prayer. For Herbert, it is in the communal worship of the Church that a connection is made between earth and heaven. His poetry resounds with a desire to rise towards heaven and to be in the presence of God. That such a longing is expressed in the context of the community of faith is significant; it is only through and within this community that such a desire can be fulfilled. This is expressed centrally in the Eucharist which serves both as the manifestation of the presence of God and earth, and as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. Here the eschatological dimension is revealed. The influence of the tradition of the Church and contemporary theologians provide a foundation to Herbert's approach. The ascent towards God culminates in the Church joining with the eternal praises of the saints and angels in heaven. "The Church Militant" encapsulates this journey in the cyclic movement of the sun which nevertheless steadily progresses towards completion in reaching the point of judgement. The fulfilment of the longings of the Church is achieved in

<sup>1</sup> Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*; Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric*; Tuve, *A Reading of George Herbert*.

the last day when earth will join with heaven in true and perfect praise of God.

### "We sing one common Lord" *Church as worshipping community*

The subtitle of Herbert's collection of English poems, "sacred poems and private ejaculations" encourages an interpretation of the poems based almost solely on relationship of the individual to God in the context of the spiritual life. Nevertheless, these phrases must be read in juxtaposition with the title itself, *The Temple*. Although many of the poems are written in the first person in the style of personal reflection and prayer, it must be noted that these are placed within the "temple," and the majority within the central lyric section entitled "The Church," both locations for public, corporate worship. In creating this overarching structure, Herbert firmly locates the practice of personal devotion within the communal body of the Church, both physically and spiritually. This theme is explicitly highlighted in the opening poem "The Church Porch" which encourages entrance into the Church and extols the importance of the Church community. However, public and private manifestations of prayer do not remain in a fixed relationship to each other; Herbert's use of liturgy and manipulation of language reveals a cyclic movement in which individual devotion leads to corporate praise, which in turn stimulates personal prayer. The individual voice is taken up and drawn into the experience of the Church without being denied or excluded. Herbert's ecclesiology does not ignore or reject the individual, but recognises the place of each person within the communal body of the people of God. The reader is therefore invited into the expression of the poetry and therefore into the community and communion of the Church.

Many attempts have been made to account for the tripartite structure of *The Temple* in reference to a specific theme. Especially useful is Hanley's examination of the image of the temple as a "unifying



device" throughout the work through resonances in individual poems, especially in the first part of "*The Church*." Hanley identifies a progression from the building of the "Church Porch" to the ambiguous concept of "*The Church*" and finally to the dynamic body of the "Church-Militant."<sup>2</sup> Such progression echoes the linear accounts of those such as Fish who perceives the stages of the catechumenate in the development of the work. Such images are helpful in identifying the broad focus of *The Temple*. Nevertheless, the notion of linear progression limits the movement expressed in Herbert's poems; a detailed examination of the development of individual poems and their placement within the sequence suggests instead a cyclical movement. The titles of the sections can be read as stages in a cycle beginning with the "Church Porch" which provides entrance to "*The Church*" which in turn sends the reader out to participate in the work of the "Church Militant" in the world. The image of the cycle not only governs the overall structure, but influences the content of the individual poems. Such cyclical movement emphasises the interdependence of the physical building with the work of the Church in the world and the individuals who make up that body. The overarching image of the temple may be architectural in origin, but Herbert's primary focus is on the temple of the human heart. This is established from the opening lyric of "*The Church*" in which the "Altar" constructed by the speaker is "made of a heart." The juxtaposition of the heart with the image of the stones which traditionally form the altar becomes a common theme; the physical stones which made up the temple are a rich metaphor for the intricacies of the human relationship to God. Placed within the building and community of "*The Church*" the stones of the heart, though broken, are the only means by which the speaker can "praise thy name." Yet in a subtle modulation, the altar becomes an independent construction, perhaps representing the poetry that has been written. The speaker distinguishes himself from the object, which in the face of his personal inadequacy will "not cease" to

<sup>2</sup> Hanley 122

praise God through divine sanctification. Therefore the movement from a physical temple to the spiritual domain of the human heart becomes a cycle; the poem returns to the constructed object to develop an understanding of God and his interaction with humanity.

The opening section of *The Temple* seems more removed from this cyclical movement; the "Church Porch" is focussed on the preliminary steps to be taken before entering the Church. Nevertheless, it introduces the dynamic between personal actions and devotions and the consequences of being part of a community of faith. The combination of secular moral advice and religious instruction signifies a transition towards participation in the Church both earthly and mystical and therefore anticipates the development of *The Temple* as a whole. Most significantly as this point, this poem emphasises the vital connection between private devotion and public prayer. This begins on a moral level; gamblers who play for gain not only bring ruin on their families but must also face their "cracked name... in the church glass" (198). The deeper implication of this is that individual behaviour has a bearing on the spiritual life both of the person, and the community of which they are a part. This is explicitly stated in stanza 67 in an exhortation to public prayer which is "warmest" in containing "more promises, more love" (397). Yet it is not simply the practical value of sharing in prayer, for "where most pray, is heaven" (402) and therefore by implication the deepest expression of the identity of humanity in relation to God is in communal prayer and worship. Despite the moral tone of this poem, the underlying motivation is a concept of the Church as a worshipping community, drawing individuals into relationship with one another and with God.

It is the relationship with God which has the primary focus throughout "*The Church*" but this is informed by the ideal of community suggested in "The Church Porch." Hodgkins argues that behind Herbert's understanding of the Church and society is the Tudor ideal of the commonwealth. In this social vision the Church is the chief agent of

social cohesion.<sup>3</sup> To apply this to the lyric poetry can politicise their expression too far, yet it is a valuable highlighting of the importance of community for Herbert. Just as the exhortation to the individual in "The Church Porch" was as preparation for entering through the door, so the private devotions of *"The Church"* lead to and inform public worship. This is achieved most directly in Herbert's interaction with the liturgy, the "common prayer" of the Church. Many of Herbert's poems have titles drawn from liturgical festivals of the Church year, or specific services within the Prayer Book.<sup>4</sup> It is the opening portion of *"The Church"* which contains the highest frequency of these poems; Herbert follows the cycle of the liturgical calendar to provide a focus for reflection. The movement from the "whips, nails, wounds and woes" of "Good Friday" to the "cold hard stone" of "Sepulchre" representing Holy Saturday to the joyful proclamation "Rise heart; thy Lord is risen" of "Easter" invite the reader to respond to the intensity of the Easter Triduum in personal reflection. Yet the location of these private meditations in the context of the communal worship of the Church reveals that for Herbert the two are intertwined.

Such representations of liturgical feasts are used by Herbert to evoke participation in the cyclic movement of prayer and worship. The poem "Christmas" begins with a personal meditation which creatively reaches through time and subverts expectations. Rather than riding to Church on Christmas to celebrate the Incarnation, the speaker is found riding after "pleasures." Furthermore, the liturgical calendar is not acknowledged; this is simply "one day." The speaker is "quite astray," oblivious to the significance of the time and place. Yet, although he is unaware, his Lord is expecting him. Having discovered the mystery of the Incarnation the speaker responds with praise joining with the shepherds to "out-sing the day-light hours." The absence of any liturgical reference in the quotidian setting of the opening does not negate the

<sup>3</sup> Hodgkins, "Betwixt this world and that of grace" 457

<sup>4</sup> Van Wengen-Shute performs a comprehensive analysis of these resonances in *George Herbert and the Liturgy of the Church of England*.

importance of this poem as marking a central feast. In fact, the imperative to "sing one common Lord" and the first person plural pronouns of the second section invite the reader to join the praises of the Church and natural order symbolised by the sun in celebration of this festival. As Targoff notes, the intertwining of "I" and "we" is a central principle of the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>5</sup> "Whitsunday" contains a similar movement; as a reflection on the day associated with the birth of the Church as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit, this poem enacts the relationship between personal inspiration and the need for the Church to be renewed in the Spirit. It begins in the first person singular asking for the Spirit in the form of the dove to "spread thy golden wings in me" (2). The speaker perceives a decline in the glory of the Church since the death of the apostles and moves to the first person plural. Despite the implication of an accusation against God, the final stanza recognises that "though we change, thou art the same" (25) and calls for the miracle poured out onto the infant Church to restore the present Church. The prayer for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the individual therefore leads to a desire for the renewal of the Church as the community of believers following in the way of the Apostles.

A similar dynamic is found in poems such as "Mattins" and "Even-song" and the "Antiphon" poems. Here the starting point is the daily offices of the Book of Common Prayer which are the foundation of the communal prayer of the Church. Once again, the content of the poems is undoubtedly personal; "Mattins" focuses on Herbert's predominant theme of the human heart as the means of interaction with God. Yet it draws references to the heart in the Confession and the Venite which declares "harden not your hearts" and themes of light and darkness as found in the Benedictus in which the "dayspring from on high" gives "light to them that sit in darkness." Such echoes of the liturgy locate private prayer to begin the day firmly within the context of the prayer of the Church. The personal plea "Teach me thy love to know" emerges

<sup>5</sup> Targoff 87



from the prayers of the Office and leads back to them; the poem "Even-song" opens "Blest be the God of love/ Who gave me eyes and light" revealing the continuity within the office. The theme of rest provided at the close of day suggests the prayer of Simeon in the Nunc Dinitis, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." The echoes of liturgical texts in personal prayer therefore suggest their interdependence; the poem begins by individualising the Office of Evening Prayer, but the evoking liturgy it draws the reader back to the common prayer of the Church. The "Antiphon" poems are located more explicitly in the context of communal prayer; antiphonal recitation of psalms during the office was a common practice which emphasises the role of interaction and communication as part of public worship. "Antiphon (I)" uses the interaction of chorus and verse to characterise this dialogue; the whole world is called to praise God and join in the worship of the Church. Significantly, Herbert explicitly deals with the opposition between the human heart and the Church in the second section. The church "must shout" with psalms and proclaim the kingship of God, but the heart "must bear the longest part." The worship "shouted" abroad from the Church must be joined with and be rooted in worship of the heart. Once again, the heart is at the centre of a cycle which includes the external worship of the Church, the foundation in personal devotion, and the outworking of that in "all the world." Despite the seeming opposition between Church and heart, they are both drawn into the imperative of praise, participating in the exchange necessary for the proclamation of God to the world.

The movement within the poems and within the structure as a whole from the individual towards the communal serves as an invitation to the reader into the community of faith; through his poetry Herbert creates a "temple" and draws the reader in to participate in the location and action of praise to God. Towards the end of *"The Church"* the invitation becomes more explicit and insistent as a greater sense of the communal nature of the worship of the Church emerges. The poem "Aaron" is an exploration of the priesthood in a very personal sense as the

speaker, a "poor priest," compares himself to Aaron and discovers the only way he can fulfill this model is through Christ. Nevertheless, this intensely individual reflection leads to the call, "Come people; Aaron's dressed." The struggle of this priestly figure, expressed throughout *"The Church"* as the pervasive struggle of humanity with sin and the necessity to turn to Christ, cannot remain an individual or even a priestly struggle. The revelation of the priest's dependence on Christ allows him to welcome others into this relationship; the preparation of the priest is the prelude to call to all people to come to God. Similarly, in a poem which recalls "The Church Porch," Herbert elaborates on the welcoming call of the priest specifically in the context of the Eucharist. "The Invitation" begins "Come ye hither all" and speaks of the redeeming quality of the feast that is God himself echoing the words of the prayer book, "draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort". The insistent call at the beginning of each line, "Come ye hither all" offers the hope that the sinful misplaced eating, drinking, joy and love experienced by the reader will be transformed in the sharing of the body and blood of Christ in whom true nourishment, both physical and spiritual, is found. The poem speaks of a vision in which all join in this feast for "where is all, there all should be." Such an ideal of a community united around the Eucharist is once again expressed as if in the voice of the priest; yet it calls the reader to join in this act and therefore evokes the communion of the Church as central to this celebration. As the reader progresses from "The Church Porch" through *"The Church"* she is drawn into this fellowship of faith which emerges from personal devotion and culminates in the communal sharing of the Eucharist. The progression in individual poems from the private to the communal voice is one means of this movement; the first person singular invites the empathy of the reader on the spiritual journey while the plural voice proactively encourages the reader to become part of a community. The prayerful tone of the poems addressed to God provides an insight into the spiritual life of the persona, and can evoke a corresponding reflection in the reader. The location of such meditations in a liturgical con-

text ensures the communal dimension is not lost; the spiritual life leads into and grows out of participation in the life of the Church. Herbert therefore seeks to draw the reader into his ecclesiological vision of the Eucharistic community reached through the continual cyclic interrelation between the individual and the corporate body.

### *"Church bells beyond the stars heard"* *Worship as joining earth and heaven*

The communal worship of the Church is central to Herbert's understanding of faith; the temple of the human heart is vital to participation in the construction of the "temple" which is the worshipping community. However, the cycle of praise does not end with the building of this temple, or even the participation within it. Herbert's understanding of worship, as expressed in his poetry, envisions the joining of heaven and earth. Herbert's ecclesiology does not exclude the spirituality of the individual, but builds on that foundation the temple of the Church, and from there reaches upwards towards heaven. Herbert's poetry continually returns to the image of rising or climbing, but it is important to recognise that this is rooted both in the personal experience of the speaker, and in participation in the communal worship of the Church. In straining upwards, the heart seeks the community of faith in which is found "heaven in ordinary." The desire for some form of unity between heaven and earth begins to be fulfilled in the context of communal worship. The integration of the image of rising and the link between earth and heaven reaches its culmination in the sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist. Just as the ministry of the priest can represent a uniting of heaven and earth, so Herbert's poetry, in expressing the desire for such union, seeks to inspire a longing to rise towards God.

Herbert's use of the image of rising begins with his poems on Easter, the climax of the opening liturgical sequence which focuses on the events of Holy Week. The poem "Easter" begins precisely with the command, "Rise heart; thy Lord is risen" declaring that Christ takes the

speaker "by the hand" that "with him [thou] mayest rise." The transition from heart to hand reveals the synecdoche of the heart as representing the whole self, while the direct second person address draws the reader into the command. The concept of interaction and community is therefore present throughout the poem, and explicitly celebrated in the Trinitarian reference to heart, lute and Spirit. The pictorial hieroglyph of "Easter Wings" continues this theme of rising with the Lord; the "vic-tory" of Christ gives the speaker wings to share in the resurrection. Here the emphasis is on unity with Christ; the plea of the second stanza is "With thee/ Let me combine" which corresponds to the plea to rise. It is therefore in communion with God through Christ that humanity can reach towards heaven. The reference to the Spirit in "Easter" returns in "Whitsunday" as here it is not the resurrection of Christ, but the "golden wings" of the "Dove" with whom the speaker seeks to fly away. As with both Easter poems, music and harmony as praise and worship are interwoven with images of flight. Although the "song" of the latter poem is in an individual sense, the other poems stress the interdependence of the parts of music, and the need for communication and integration. In some sense, as the physical sound of the worship of the community rises up to heaven, so the individuals who take part are drawn into participation and communion with God.

The most explicit presentation of this occurs in the poem "Church-Music" which is one of the sequence of so-called "church furniture" poems. The same image of unity and integration is present here which suggests that the music is serving as a metaphor: "I in you without a body move,/ Rising and falling with your wings." The designation "sweetest of sweets" and the reference to "your house of pleasure" encourage the reader to understand the addressee as God himself. In the central stanza the emphasis is less on a specific ascending movement, but simply a sharing in the flowing, harmonious life expressed by the music. Yet the destination of such movement is revealed in the final line, "You know the way to heaven's door." The poem claims that, despite and even through the focus on individual pleasure, the music of



the communal worship of the Church in its movement unites the listener with God and therefore creates an interface between earth and heaven. Significantly, the reference to "heaven's door" is followed immediately by a meditation on the "Church Lock and Key." Once again the cyclical movement occurs; in this case heaven and the church are brought into interaction by the transition from the entrance of heaven to the lock on the Church door.

The image of the ascending movement of worship is directly located in the communal context through the explicitly liturgical poems, revealing the integral role it plays in Herbert's ecclesiology. In "Matins" the celebration of the gift of the "new light" and the corporate dedication of the day to God takes the image of the "dayspring" and declares the desire to "climb" to God "by a sunbeam." Despite the seeming worthlessness of the human heart, God "pours upon it all [his] art", and it is through God's own creation that humanity can reach him. This poem expresses the common prayer of the Church in confession of failure and desire for union with God through the lens of the corporate morning office. The poem "Praise I" highlights this connection between worthlessness and communal seeking for God. It begins with a confession of the inadequacy of the poet's praise whose only gift to "raise" is "to write a verse or two." The response to such inadequacy is to "go to Church" and by implication to join in the wider praise of the worshipping community. In contrast to previous poems, the speaker asks, "help me to wings" that he might fly to Church; the ascent is initially towards the Church before it is possible rise beyond that earthly location of God's presence. Yet the repeated promise of the poem contained in the last line of each stanza is that there is the potential for "more." The wings which might assist in joining the praise of the Church fulfil their true purpose as they "mount to the sky" which results in "more" praise. The final plea echoes that of earlier poems as the speaker yearns to expand his praise to mirror the dedication and industry of the bees. God works through and beyond the Church to enable his people to praise him. "O raise me then!" transforms the meagre "raising" of a few verses

into the powerful action of God which will result in an abundance of worship superseding even the bees by "much, much more."

Such imagery of straining towards heaven is rooted both in the everyday experience of humanity, and in the liturgical worshipping life of the Church. Underlying such images is a desire to transcend the spiritual distance between earth and heaven. Herbert's requests to rise are not initially a wish for eternal life after death, or to be lifted above the world in rejection. Fundamentally, these pleas represent a desire for the presence of God, for an end to the imperfections of the human heart which seems unable to give true praise and worship to its creator. The most basic means of interaction with God is through prayer, and Herbert's first poem of this title consists almost entirely of images of interchange between earth and heaven. Significantly the second line emphasises the cyclic and interdependent nature of such interaction: "God's breath in man returning to his birth" places the initiative for communication firmly with God who created the world through his word, and gave humanity life through his breath. The image of a plummet which sounds both "heav'n and earth" may seem to emphasise the distance and contrast between the two, yet the fact that both the height of heaven and the depth of earth can be measured by the same instrument unites them. The phrase "Church-bells beyond the stars heard" similarly asserts the potential correspondence; the earthly worship of the Church reaches to the eternal realm beyond the created heavens. Ultimately the ambiguity of the final phrase captures the mystery of humanity's attempts to communicate with God: "something understood" holds out the hope of recognition by God, but leaves the content of such understanding unstated. Nevertheless, the conclusion of a proliferation of images in such a simple phrase suggests that through prayer a deeper knowledge of and relation to God is reached. The final word leaves the reader with a sense of completion, even if it is full of mystery.

Such an understanding of prayer is rich in sacramental implication; the poem contains many Eucharistic images and is immediately followed by the poem "The Holy Communion." The opening definition



of prayer is as "the Church's banquet" firmly locating interaction with God not only within the communal life of the Church, but specifically within the context of the celebration of the Eucharist. In this sacrament, God and humanity are united in the most intimate way as the congregation take Christ into themselves and ask that they "may evermore dwell in him, and he in us" ("Prayer of Humble Access", *BCP*). The poem reaches a climax in "Exalted Manna" which is followed by the pair of contrasts "Heaven in ordinary, man well dressed." The bread of the Eucharist held before the people at the consecration recalls the manna the Lord provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, but goes beyond it as the body of Christ. Yet as a sacrament it takes the ordinary elements of bread and wine and transforms them that they provide a foretaste of heaven. The accessibility of heaven which is suggested in "Prayer" is extended in "Holy Communion" in the image of Adam who could pass from Paradise on earth to heaven "as from one room to another." The poet asks for a "lift" to unite soul and body, just as the physical receiving of bread and wine in the body combines with the work of grace "op'ning the soul's most subtle rooms." The contrast between body and soul is juxtaposed with that of earth and heaven. Adam's easy access to heaven symbolises that once simply a "fervent sigh" might have "blown/ Our innocent earth to heaven." It is the agency of God through the Eucharist which has "restored" such "ease" of travel to the Church. Although the first person singular pronoun predominates in this poem, it is significant that the restoration is to "us" and therefore the Church corporately celebrating the mystery of God's gift in Christ.

As seen above, the priest has a key role in inviting the congregation to celebrate this mystery ("Aaron", "Invitation") and, by implication, mediating between God and the people in bringing the body of Christ to them. In his reflection on the Eucharistic function of the priest, Herbert declares, "most pure must those things be,/ Who bring by God to me!" ("The Priesthood"). A similar attitude is expressed in the prose work *The Country Parson* in which on the section on sacra-

ments, Herbert describes the "great confusion" experienced by the priest "as being not only to receive God, but to break and administer him." (Ch22). The parson therefore, as a representative figure of the Church, manifests in himself the possibility of uniting earth with heaven, of receiving union with God. Such imagery is not located solely in the Eucharist. In one of the poems in the Church-furniture sequence the ability to reach the door of heaven through music is also explored through the preaching of the priest. "The Windows" is the last poem in the sequence and represents a transition from the physical attributes of the Church to the life lived as a result of the lessons conveyed. Though man is a "brittle crazy glass" yet he is given a "glorious and transcendent place,/ To be a window." Just as the images on a stained glass window contain heavenly meaning, the preacher, "through [God's] grace," can by human words reveal the "eternal word" of God. In the following stanza Herbert develops and complicates his metaphor. Just as stained glass is the divine story "anneal[ed] in glass" brought to life by sunlight, so the divine "life" is made to "shine within/ The holy Preacher's" to make his preaching yet more glorious. "Doctrine and life, colours and light" combine to allow the priest to communicate the mystery of God to his people. The introduction to *The Country Parson* repeats this phrase to make explicit the connection with Christ: "The priest is to do that which Christ did, and after his manner, both for doctrine and life." (Chr). Such mediation between divine and human seeks to draws the listener or observer in, just as Herbert seeks to draw his reader into the communal quest of the Church for union with God.

### "He bath made of two folds one" *An eschatological ecclesiology*

Herbert's understanding of the Church begins in the individual heart which is extended to include the community of worshippers; the shared goal of both the individual and the community is to ascend to unity with God as expressed most fully in the Eucharist. Herbert's poetry is

not a theological treatise; *The Temple* explores the meaning of significance of the Church through the metaphor of a building, and the intricacies of personal experience. However, the framework of interpreting the Church within which Herbert is writing has a rich history in the Christian tradition, and during Herbert's time. Augustine's *City of God* divides the world into two cities, those concerned for their own welfare, and those whose lives are orientated towards God. His discussion of the second group, the "city of God" has important implications for ecclesiology. Augustine's sense of the continuation of the City of God on earth and in heaven provides an eschatological perspective on the Church which is central to Herbert's ecclesiology. Among contemporary texts, the Book of Common Prayer reflects aspects of this, which Hooker explores in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Underlying Hooker's vision of the governance of the Church is a model of the interlocking mystical Church, visible Church, and the Church triumphant. For Herbert, informed by this tradition, the rising towards God is expressed in the earthly Church through the sacraments, but this serves as a foretaste of the union with the entire Church including the saints and angels in heaven. The eschatological vision of the New Jerusalem or heavenly Sion is one in which the earthly Church finds its fulfilment in joining the Church triumphant to sing eternal praises to their common Lord.

Herbert's emphasis on the worship of the Church and the desire to rise towards God reveals that his ecclesiology is not limited to the practices or scope of the earthly Church. His vision of the Church draws on the tradition of the Church triumphant which is the fulfilment of the Church militant on earth. This distinction has been an explicit part of the understanding of the Church since Medieval theologians, however it is an implicit part of the tradition from Augustine and can be seen to be applied in Herbert's time in the work of Hooker. The idea becomes associated with the "communion of the saints" an article found in the early creeds.<sup>6</sup> Augustine does not employ the specific

<sup>6</sup> Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church

terms; yet, in *City of God* he explores the nature of the Church in the heavenly perspective. The *City of God* is not directly equivalent to the Church, but Augustine distinguishes between the City "as it exists in this world of time", and "as it stands in the security of its everlasting seat" (I, Preface). His vision is of the Church as the City of God "in pilgrimage" travelling towards its "native land on high" (XV.15). The City of God is therefore seen in some sense as transcending the boundary between earth and heaven; it unites those in the world with their fellow citizens, the saints and angels. It is such unity that Herbert seems to be striving towards through his emphasis on communal worship reaching towards heaven. Similarly, for Augustine it is in worship that the true identity of all members of the City of God is revealed. This "glorious" city which "knows and worships one God" is "proclaimed by holy angels" who have "desired us to be come fellow citizens" (X.25). Hooker also describes angels as a model for humanity in that both participate in the "supernatural society" (I.15.2) which is the universal Church. This society includes angels, and holy men who have gone before, and God himself. For Hooker, part of the "bond of association" of this society must be the divinely ordained law concerning worship (I.15.2). Augustine's goal of "harmonious fellowship in enjoyment of God" (XIX.13) is represented in Hooker's imperative to "seek the highest" the final goal of which is "participating in God himself" (I.5.2). Herbert's poetry draws on this ecclesiological insight of the unity of the Church in earth and heaven through worship of God.

The explicit distinction between the Church militant and Church triumphant becomes significant in the development of the Book of Common Prayer as it becomes associated with doctrinal disputes concerning purgatory. The intercessory prayer before the Eucharistic prayer begins, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth" and from 1552 omits the concluding prayer for the departed.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of the Prayer Book on Herbert was not en-

<sup>7</sup> Pullan, *History of the Book of Common Prayer*



tirely reductive. The Collect for All Saints Day draws on similar language to Augustine declaring that God has “knit together [his] elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of his Son”; in praying for grace to follow the saints the worshippers are drawn into this fellowship. This expresses the dual reality perceived by Augustine; “The Church even now is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven” (XX.9) and yet the City of God in the world is “existing in the hope which rests on God” (XV.21). In Herbert’s poetry an awareness of the present identity of the Church as united with heaven is the foundation of his longing for the final fulfilment of that unity. For Hooker, the Church militant must seek to resemble the “hidden dignity and glory” of the Church in heaven (V.6.2) emphasising the limitations and incomplete nature of its existence. Part of the striving to conform is, as Augustine argues to “signify the heavenly city” in the world (XV.2) and therefore to draw others into the pilgrimage of hope. Such a pattern can be seen at work in *The Temple* as Herbert’s call to communal prayer reaching towards heaven seeks to invite the reader into the journey. Augustine justifies the “one object of worship” of earth and heaven and the goal of heavenly “bliss” through the assertion “we are his temple” (X.3). The political and civil metaphor of the city here joins with Herbert’s architectural metaphor revealing the true nature of this city; it is in a fellowship of prayer and worship that the Church finds its true expression and a unity between the earthly and the heavenly is found.

The theological expression of the unity of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven corresponds to the rising motif found throughout *The Temple*. Furthermore, the account of the Church Triumphant introduces an eschatological perspective to this longing. The culmination of the ascent to heaven is the joining with the angels praising God which will be fulfilled at the end of time. Such a sense of the goal of the Church beyond time is paradoxically represented in the poetry through the use of time. In her analysis of the relationship of *The Temple* to the Book of Common Prayer, Van Wengen Shute draws attention to the two-fold relationship between liturgy and time. Liturgy both

transcends time, and, by focussing on a specific event of the past, transposes an event into the present. It therefore incorporates the worship of all who have and will participate in the praise of God.<sup>8</sup> Herbert’s poetry, in its affinity with the liturgy, performs much the same action. The poem “Prayer” though containing several temporal references, contains no verb and therefore no tense. It therefore communicates a sense of the timelessness of communion with God sought by the Church. Similarly, the juxtapositions and multiple perspectives of “Redemption” and “Christmas” create a sense of dislocation in time which anticipates the timelessness of eternity. The first poem focuses on the Passion of Christ, but draws the reader into the event by having him stumble upon his goal at the moment of crucifixion. Similarly, in “Christmas” the persona of the poem seems to begin in contemporary life; unlike the wise men of the biblical account he is not seeking the Christ-child, but simply riding after “pleasures.” Nevertheless, he stumbles on the event of the Incarnation in the first inn he could find. The image of the babe in the manger is conflated with Christ as Lord waiting to receive the wayward traveller. Here, the result is not simply redemption, but an anticipation of the worship of heaven. The synaesthesia “till e’vn his beams sing, and my music shine” suggests a reversal of earth-bound laws and expectations which creates an abundance of praise. The longing and hope expressed in this joyful conclusion is the longing for heaven where worship of God will reach its final everlasting perfection. Through temporal and spatial dislocation, Herbert is able, on a poetic level, to unite the praises of earth with those of heaven and therefore to evoke the future participation of the earthly Church in the Church Triumphant. Liturgical festivals such as Christmas remind the Church of the eternal context of its celebrations and the promise of final glorification.

A significant biblical image for this glorification is that of the New Jerusalem or Sion represented in Revelation as coming down from heaven in the last days (Rev 21.10). Herbert’s poem “Sion” does not im-

<sup>8</sup> Van Wengen Shute 90-91.



mediately evoke the majestic vision of the biblical account. In fact it is a lament, similar to that of "Decay" of the contrast between the way God relates to his Church in the past and the present. It begins with an account of the grandeur of Solomon's temple in the Old Testament. In the light of the title of the work, this one of three uses of the word "temple" is significant. Although it is referring to a specific historic artefact, it evokes the relation Herbert has set up between the physical temple, the temple of the Church, and the temple of the human heart, and therefore adumbrates the movement of the poem. The external architecture of the building is described and praised in the first stanza before being questioned by the abrupt turn in the second stanza signalled by the opening word "Yet." Despite the attraction of the external glory, the poet admits, it "was not thy aim" and now God's "frame and fabric is within." It may seem like a shameful degradation for the Almighty to meet with sin and "struggle with a peevish heart," but it is revealed as an improvement in the relationship as "one good groan" is more "dear" than all the opulence of Solomon's temple. The final stanza contains many of the themes of longing, rising, and music which seek to link earth and heaven, and reveals the significance of the title. "Brass and stones" are conclusively rejected as "not temples fit for thee," but no specific replacement is suggested. Instead, rather than the static notion of a habitation for God, the image of groans "full of wings" and upward motion is celebrated. The physical, earthly temple is therefore rejected in favour of communion with God in heaven. This final culmination is not made explicit; the phrase "and ever as they mount" suggests the continuing process of this now communal movement, just as Augustine describes the Church in pilgrimage. The final word "king" plays on the identity of Solomon as king of Israel which is transcended by the King of Heaven, just as the temple is transcended by the groans of a sinful heart. The resonances of the title are therefore expanded and reversed throughout the poem; initially the reader associates the temple with Jerusalem or Sion, but the final stanza looks for the eschatological Sion in which all will be united in making music to the worship of their King.

Such an interpretation of the trajectory of the poem beyond its conclusion is confirmed by the poem immediately following it, "Home." The very title suggests a gloss on, or an expansion of the meaning of "Sion" as the destination of the quick-winged groans of the previous poem. Here the persona rejects what might be seen as his true home, the earth, and insistently calls upon God, "O show thyself to me,/ Or take me up to thee!" The dissatisfaction with "this weary world" leads to the desire for "the last and loved, though dreadful day" which will bring the persona to his God. This longing for the day of judgement, the eschaton, when the harvest will not be of "corn and hay" but of souls is a longing for the true home of the individual and of the Church. Yet the poem seems divided within itself; in part it is a rejection of the world and its worthlessness in the heavenly perspective. However, the refrain holds this desire, "take me up to thee" in tension with the first cry, "O show thyself to me." The final stanza unites these conflicting desires through the evocation of the liturgical season of Advent. The first line returns to the prayer of the opening stanza "Come dearest Lord, pass not this holy season." Although the season is not defined, the references to judgement day and the repetition of the call, "Come" suggests the Church's preparation for the coming of Christ during Advent. The poem is an individual expression of the fulfilment of the Church in the eschatological Sion, inaugurated by the coming of Christ, and resulting in union with God in heaven.

The emphasis in both Augustine and Hooker on the interaction and fellowship with angels as part of mutual participation in the life of the Church is reflected in Herbert's poetry. His eschatological vision of the Church is to join with the angels and saints in their perfect worship of God. It is here that the Church militant becomes the Church triumphant and its identity as the mystical body of Christ is fulfilled. Herbert's poems entitled "Antiphon" evoke the practice of antiphonal recitation and singing which takes place in the liturgy, but the second poem extends this by creating an interaction between men and angels. The two-fold significance emphasises that the worship of the Church on

earth echoes that of the heavenly choirs, but also anticipates that final union. The chorus begins each section with a general statement which is followed by an elaboration by each group. The usual pattern is that the angels respond first followed by men, but in the opening and closing sequences the men respond first. Besides providing a basic symmetry, this places the foundation of the praise with men on earth with the elaboration and continuation ascribed to the angels. Such an interdependence is reflected in the interlocking rhyme scheme in which the second line of the first sequence rhymes with the following chorus and with the second response. Each stanza consists of two sequences and the rhyme scheme continues throughout the stanzas: ababcb cdcddc...etc. The substance of this collaboration of worship is the praise of "the God of love" and his works and the response of adoration by the angels, and "crouching" reverence by humanity. The common conclusion reached by the Chorus, "Lord, thy praises should be more" and the common expressions of inadequacy by men who "have none" and angels who have "no store" cuts short the final stanza. Until this point the responses of each group seem to emphasise their distinction, however the underlying unity of purpose is revealed in the concluding choric couplet: "Praised be the God alone/ Who hath made of two folds one." The unity of the visible Church with the mystical Church is therefore contained in the praise of the one God who orders both heaven and earth and seeks the unity of all. The perfect tense of this phrase gives praise for the current effect of the action of God and looks forward to the true expression of this unity in the eschatological transformation of the earthly Church.

Herbert's use of participation with the angels to express the eschatological fulfilment of the Church is therefore clear, however his position on the saints is more ambiguous than that of Augustine and Hooker; he shares some of the Protestant reservations implicit in the Prayer Book. The poem "To All Angels and Saints" explores these uncertainties; it can be read as the process of rejecting the attractive Catholic devotion to the saints for a more reformed tradition. Nevertheless, in exploring Herbert's underlying understanding of the mystical

Church this poem by no means excludes saints and angels from this company. It is not devotion as such that the poem rejects; the tone towards Mary, the "blessed Maid" is full of praise: "Thou art the holy mine, whence came gold." The practice the poem abandons reluctantly with the sigh, "alas!" is that of "address[ing]...vows" or seeking the intercession of the saints. In fact, it is precisely the joint praise as enacted in "Antiphon" that provides the justification for this rejection. It is the absence of any command of the King "whom we all do jointly adore and praise" that requires this attitude. "All worship" is the "prerogative" of God; the poem therefore asserts the unity between the "glorious spirits" and those on earth in their common purpose. The vision of the opening stanza of those who "see the smooth face of God" ensures that those members of the Church on earth do not hold themselves superior to the saints, but holds out the hope of a greater unity in heavenly adoration of the King.

The eschatological direction of *The Temple* reaches its culmination in the poems of the "four last things" which signify the end times, the eschaton. Yet despite the serious titles of these poems, Herbert's tone is ironic and almost mocking. Throughout the temple the longing for union with God, and for the fulfilment of the identity of the Church has been a common theme, and it is these aspects of the end of time that Herbert finds the hope of the resolution of his longing. Significantly, the poem that precedes this sequence is entitled "A Wreath" and it is its circular mirror image structure creates a "garland" and "crown of praise," an action which unites existence both before and after the last things. In this light, the following poem addresses death who "wast once an uncouth hideous thing" is now given "beauty" through the death of Christ. In a reversal of expectation, Death is no longer the enemy, but in fact welcomed by "gay and glad" company of souls at doomsday. The following poem takes up this theme of this day when the dead and the living shall be brought before God. Once again a refrain, recalling that of "Home," declares "Come away" calling the dead souls to live, and to help the "straying" and "decaying" of the living. The final couplet is a



plea to the Lord and returns to the theme of music and praise. Although the Church on earth may be a "broken consort" once "raised" by God "the music shall be praise." The brokenness refers not only to the failings of the flesh, but also to the separation through death of the different parts of the Church. The action of God on this "doomsday" is therefore to unite all those who have participated in his worship to the harmony of perfect praise. The final poem in this sequence "Heaven" employs the device of a dialogue not with a specific persona such as an angel this time, but with a divinely inspired echo who reveals, within the speaker's questions, the truth of the everlasting joy of the "delights on high." These delights are expressed in the final poem "Love" in which the earlier invitations to the banquet of the Eucharist are fulfilled in the meal provided by love. The personal tone of the poem does not exclude a liturgical and communal context; the tone draws on the language of the Holy Communion service in the Prayer Book, and provides a personal account of the banquet attended by all the faithful. The final culmination is not reached until the postscript following the declaration "FINIS." Here a quotation from the Gloria which follows the Eucharist in the Prayer Book unites the liturgical celebration of the Church with the praise of the angels in heaven. The song of the angels in announcing Christ's birth is now the song of the entire Church united in praise of God.

*"The sun still goes both west and east"*

*"The Church Militant" as eschatological ecclesiology*

"The Church Militant" forms the final part of the three-fold structure of *The Temple* and continues to develop Herbert's exploration of ecclesiology. The title provides a clear link to the sections which have preceded it and, despite the contrasting genre, unites and encapsulates the themes of cycle and eschatology which have been developed in "The Church." The poem is Herbert's most sustained treatment of the Church as an institution and a concept; it can be read as a culmination

of the foregoing reflections. The central image of the poem, the cycles of history symbolised by the movement of the sun, echoes the use of the cycle of the liturgical year, and the cyclical relationship between individual and communal devotion that underlies Herbert's ecclesiology. The structure of the poem reflects this movement; the refrain expressing praise to God punctuates the five sections. The poem draws the institutional and heavenly perspectives together and places them within an eschatological context; the content of the poem deals largely with the history of the Church, but the imagery of hope in the completion of the cycle reveal the eternal context. As seen in Augustine, the pilgrimage of the Church implies a heavenly destination and fulfilment.

The inclusion of "The Church Militant" within *The Temple* has been much disputed due to the change in genre and subject, and the conclusive FINIS printed at the end of "The Church." Nevertheless, the title fits with the other two sections of the work, and in the manuscript is set out in a similar way as a header across each page.<sup>9</sup> The narrative style distinguishes it from the large central lyric section, but it can be seen to mirror the extended collection of proverbs that make up the "The Church-Porch." Some have tried to integrate this poem on the basis of an architectural model of linear progression.<sup>10</sup> The reader moves from the Church-Porch, cleansed by obedience to the moral instructions found there to enter the building of the Church where he engages in the spiritual pilgrimage of the Christian life. By this account "The Church Militant" should represent the broader perspective gained in the experience of "The Church," a heavenly or eternal perspective. In some ways, the poem does fulfil this expectation by stepping back from the individual experience to the broad trajectory of the history of the Church. It is however, very much centred on time-bound history; as Lynch warns, the poem should not be read as if it were entitled "The

<sup>9</sup> The Temple, EEBO

<sup>10</sup> Cf Fish, *Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechizing*



Church Triumphant."<sup>11</sup> The difficulty of conforming the poem to such a model is the cause of much of the rejection of the poem as an integral part of the work. Yet, if as Lynch suggests, the linear model of *The Temple* is rejected, this final poem can be read as an exploration of the Church from a particular angle and not dependent on a direct progression from the previous sections. Just as "*The Church*" uses the immediate experience of the individual to comment on the communal life of the Church, so "*The Church Militant*" employs a personification of the corporate body of the Church to place the experience of the individual within a wider context. As such, it draws on the poetry that has gone before in the work and weaves the themes of cycle and eschatology into the narrative form. Rather than an irrelevant extra, this poem is the culmination of the themes of the lyric poetry as the pattern concealed in the fluctuations of individual poems is revealed for what it is. Though Lynch's caution should be taken into account, such an eschatological context invites a reading of the poem which sees the fulfilment of the Church Militant in the vision of the Church Triumphant.

The fundamental nature of this pattern is that of cycle. In "*The Church*" this was implied in the references to the liturgical calendar and the interaction between private and corporate devotion. In the final poem of *The Temple* the image of the daily and yearly movement of the sun provides the governing motif. This places Herbert's understanding of the Church within the context of the divine ordering of the world and specifically of time, and by consequence provides an eternal perspective of God's purpose and will. The biblical image of the Church as the spouse of Christ is extended through a network of images to that of the sun. The progression of images draws on language from the Song of Solomon in the vines and spices and finally of the woman who "looketh forth as the morning... clear as the sun" (SofS 6.10). The geographical reference to Eastern origins leads to the association with the rising of the sun in the East and its westward movement throughout the day. Just

as in an earlier poem Herbert perceives a providential correspondence between the words "Son" and "sun," here the fact that the movement of the Church mirrors that of the sun provides enlightenment for the mind: "The course was westward, that the sun might light/ As well our understanding as our sight." The physical light of the sun represents the beauty and power of the Church, but its daily cycle demonstrates the divine will for his spouse. The natural facts of the sun also provide a further historical detail of the Church's progress; just as the sun "allows some light,/Till all depart" so the Church's global pilgrimage is a gradual one. It is not until the third section of the poem that the darkness which is left behind is actively personified as "Sin" who "chid the Church away" and corrupted the light she had shone.

The repeated refrain divides the poem into clear sections, while highlighting the cyclic pattern. These sections represent an interplay between the short term cycle experienced by each geographical area as the sun of the Church rises and sets, and the broader picture of the sun's steady movement around the globe in a long term cycle. The punctuation of the refrain emphasises the stages of this progression and creates windows in which the detailed level of the cycle is revealed. Such interplay reflects the development in "*The Church*" towards a culmination effected by the constant cycle between individual and corporate devotion. Here this motif is extended to a global scale and beyond to evoke an eternal perspective. The refrain itself is in contrast to the genre of the poem as a whole. "How dear to me, O God, thy counsels are!/ Who may with thee compare?" The tone returns to the prayerful, personal voice of the lyric poetry and draws on the language of the Psalms. The impossibility of finding anyone or anything who can be compared to God is a common theme; in Psalm 139 the mysterious and ubiquitous presence of the Lord is expressed in terms of his "counsels" (vs 17). Such a personal declaration in the context of a history of the Church keeps alive the dialectic found in the lyric poetry, but highlights the sovereignty of God over the events being narrated. The consistent repetition evokes the constancy of God and provides a solid point of

<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Lynch, "The Temple: Three parts vied and multiplied" SEL 1500-1900 29 (1989; 139-155) 145

return amidst the rising and setting of the sun. Although the presence and strength of the Church may appear to be in constant flux, God does not change. The refrain therefore unites the poles of the cycle; the unexpected personal tone reminds the reader that the institution of the Church is made up of individuals for whom the counsels of God are dear, while the incomparability of God provides a cosmic perspective for the petty human manipulations and corruptions in the Church. The refrain locates the Church militant both within the temple of the human heart, and refers it to the majesty of the God who is Lord of the Church triumphant.

Such a constant reference to the eternal perspective reveals the eschatological context of this poem. The implication of the refrain is not explicitly expressed until the very final lines in which the tradition of Jerusalem as the location of the second coming and therefore the place of judgement is evoked. The use of the conceit of the sun which "still goes both west and east" allows Herbert to represent the twofold movement of the Church which did "by going west/ Still eastward go." This creates a symmetry in referring back to the introduction of the image of the sun in the opening lines. Such imagery recall the lyric poem on Colossians 3:3 in which "the double motion" of the sun represents both the mortality of the individual in the "diurnal" progress towards the earth, and the hidden movement towards "that which is on high" namely the harvest of "an eternal treasure." The daily cycle of the sun is placed in the context of its broader movement across the earth, and therefore the completion of the cycle from East to West. For Herbert, the supremacy of God praised in the refrain is revealed in this very fact. Although the final section of "Church Militant" contains the famous statement "Then shall religion to America flee" the tone is not one of despair. Even America will have "Both their virtuous actions and their crimes" and the cycle will continue towards the final Eastern goal. The outcome of the "judgement" that will be performed here is not described, yet the implication is that at this point sin will be defeated and the Church shall receive its true identity in relationship to God. The

return to Jerusalem evokes the vision of Revelation in which the new redeemed city of Zion shall replace the earthly Jerusalem; the city of God will not be threatened by the darkness of Sin, nor will it even require the light of the sun, but will glory in the eternal heavenly light of the Lord.

## Conclusion

In *The Temple* Herbert explores and develops a complex ecclesiology that encompasses the relationship between the individual and the community, earth and heaven, and the Church militant and Church triumphant. The personal tone of the poems does not exclude a communal perspective; in fact the private voice becomes part of the corporate voice of the Church. Just as the individual is drawn into the community of faith, so the earthly Church seeks to join with the Church in heaven. It is in offering praise and worship to God that such participation can occur as it is in this action that the Church fulfils its true identity. The celebration of the Eucharist provides a foretaste of the great eschatological banquet as it unites the members of the earthly Church in communion with each other, and in fellowship with the angels and saints in heaven. His vision of the Church is of a "city of God" united in praise of God, looking for final fulfilment in heaven. Such an ecclesiology asserts the value of the communion of its members on earth, through a participation in the communion of the saints, and in the hope



*St Andrew's Church, Bemerton, where Herbert was Rector between 1630 and 1633*

of communion with God in heaven in the eschaton. Herbert's poetry builds a temple of prayer and worship, but not for its own sake. This is a temple that enables the worship of the community of the Church, and that therefore enables it to look beyond the earthly form and strive towards the heavenly consummation of its praise.

# Secularism, Identity Discourses and the Syrian Orthodox Church

NEVSKY EVERETT

## *Introduction*

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE of this research<sup>12</sup> is to explore the role of the Syrian Orthodox Church amidst the identity crises of the Assyrian/Syriac community.<sup>13</sup> The particular constraints of Turkish society (i.e. religious intolerance and the demand for ethnic homogeneity) have led to a struggle for the recognition of the Assyrian/Syriac people.<sup>14</sup> This struggle has in turn brought about the development of a secular, ethnic Assyrian/Syriac identity that can be divorced from a particularly religious identity.<sup>15</sup> There has been some dissatisfaction with the Church, and a rise in secular organisations. This essay will explore some of the dynamics of this secular identity, before considering the challenges facing the Assyrian/Syriac community in Turkey today, and the role of the church historically and at the present time.

In order to carry out this research, I spent three weeks with members of the Assyrian/Syriac communities in Istanbul.<sup>16</sup> I was put in touch with a few members of the Syrian Orthodox Church before I set

<sup>12</sup> This research was generously funded by the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association and the Philip Usher Memorial Fund. I am grateful to Fr William Taylor, Fr Ian Sherwood, Dr Naures Atto, Soner Onder, Bishop Athanasius and Fr Aphram Ozan for all their help and support.

<sup>13</sup> This term of reference arises from the complicated questions of identity and self-designation amongst the 'Suryoye' (the Syriac term for Assyrians/Syriacs.) It is used by Naures Atto in her work, *Hostages in the Homeland*, Orphans in the Diaspora, and it will be used here. Whilst it might seem clumsy, it is as neutral a term as is possible.

<sup>14</sup> Dönmez and Enneli, *Societal Peace and Ideal Citizenship for Turkey*, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Though, of course, it is not necessarily the case that this secular and ethnic identity is divorced from a religious identity. I spoke with a deacon of the church for whom both were important aspects of his self-understanding.

<sup>16</sup> I was in Istanbul 4th-25th March, 2013.



off, for which I am hugely grateful to Naures Arto and Soner Onder, and met with a number of other people through several visits to the Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in Istanbul. I interviewed a number of these contacts, adapting my research questions in each particular context. These interviews have provided me with the material to write this essay, and have given me an insight into the life and work of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Istanbul.

Awareness of the position of the Syrian Orthodox Church is increasing in Europe, but largely in relation to the struggle of the Assyrian/Syriac people for recognition in Turkish society, and even then specifically through the work of Assyrian/Syriac communities in the Diaspora. This awareness, therefore, tends to centre around two related issues. The first of these is the concern for the Mor Gabriel monastery, in Tur 'Abdin,<sup>17</sup> the historic heartland of Assyrian/Syriac Christianity, and the second is to do with Turkey's human rights record and the question of E.U. membership.

In 2009, some 19,000 Assyrians/Syriacs marched in Berlin to draw attention to the plight of the Mor Gabriel monastery. For some time, the monastery has been under threat from a series of legal challenges which threaten to strip the monastery of its land and assets. If the challenges succeed, there is a realistic fear that the monastery would struggle to survive. Arto has called the monastery a 'nodal point' for Assyrian/Syriac identity because of its strong symbolic role, representing both Christianity in Turkey and also embodying the roots of the 'Suryoye' in their homeland.<sup>18</sup> The monastery's legal struggles have won the support of many European politicians. In an important collection of essays concerning Mor Gabriel, a German MP, Ute Granold, highlights the importance of the monastery as a test case of the Turkish State's

<sup>17</sup> Modern south-east Turkey, in Mardin and Şırnak provinces. For a significant discussion of the concept of homeland, see Arto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Arto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, pp. 3, 6.

dealings with its religious minorities.<sup>19</sup> Delegations from the monastery have visited Berlin frequently, and for the Human Rights working group of the German parliament, supporting Mor Gabriel is an important aspect of Germany's global engagement for religious freedom.<sup>20</sup> In March 2011, nineteen E.U. ambassadors based in Ankara visited the monastery to show support and the ongoing lawsuits are being monitored by the E.U.<sup>21</sup>

These two issues are fundamental to contemporary Syrian Orthodox self-identity, but both are primarily to do with the struggle for recognition in Turkish society. This struggle arises from the very particular, and complicated, constraints of Turkish identity. It is important to note the transnational nature of the Syrian Orthodox church, despite the particular reference to Turkey in both this essay specifically, and in the secondary literature more generally.

In preparation for my research in Istanbul, I spent some time with Bishop Athanasius and Fr. Aphram Ozan at the Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in Acton, west London. Both men are originally from Iraq, and studied theology at the St. Ephrem Monastery, Maa'rat Sadnaya, Damascus. Their perspective, therefore, is not a Turkish one and neither of them have been particularly vocal about Mor Gabriel or Tur 'Abdin in our discussions. As well as this internal diversity in the Syrian Orthodox Church, there are of course other Assyrian/Syriac churches and these churches may well play a greater role in the self-understanding of the Assyrian/Syriac communities that they serve in other countries and places. Nevertheless, the focus of this essay will primarily be on the Syrian Orthodox community in Istanbul, as they are the largest Assyrian/Syriac church present in that city.

<sup>19</sup> Granold, 'Mor Gabriel: A Symbol of how the Turkish State Deals with its Religious Minorities. An Overview of German and European Political Initiative in Support of the Monastery,' in *The Slow Disappearance*, p. 229.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

Istanbul was chosen as the place for this research for a number of reasons. It is in some senses removed from the religious 'homeland' of Tur 'Abdin (culturally, geographically, etc.) but, as many Assyrians/Syriacs emigrated from rural areas to Istanbul during the period of industrialisation and urbanisation, there are still strong connections with the south-eastern provinces of Turkey.<sup>22</sup> For many, Istanbul was also a stepping stone to Europe.<sup>23</sup> Istanbul is also home to Mezo-Der (Mesopotamian Culture and Solidarity Association; a primarily secular, ethnic organisation, although the Association does recognise the privileged place of Christianity in Assyrian/Syriac culture).<sup>24</sup> Another important factor is that Istanbul is a modern and cosmopolitan city in a relatively traditional society. This means that the place of religion in society and personal life is safeguarded in a way that is not necessarily true of more secular European societies, and the clergy may well be more influential amongst the community than their European counterparts. Many Assyrians/Syriacs in Turkey have rejected the secularism of the Kemalist Republic for political reasons, and so it is less likely for this community to be overtly secular in its outlook, although a strong sense of ethnic identity need not be equated with a secular one.

This undoubtedly leads to a very complicated socio-religious milieu. The Syrian Orthodox Church has faced persecution and discrimination from the earliest times, and yet the Church has remained committed to its faith, its history and its traditions. This essay will explore the ways in which the Syrian Orthodox Church continues to faithfully serve her people in Istanbul in their very particular and difficult context.

<sup>22</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.mezoder.org/hakkimizda/>; Jenny Thomsen's report on the Assyrians/Syriacs of Istanbul was based on work with this group. Thomsen, *The Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey: A Forgotten People*, pp. 5, 7. One of my correspondents, however, spoke of the Church authorities' disapproval of and distance from this organisation.

## *Minority Rights in Turkey*

The status of ethnic and religious minorities in Turkish society has been well discussed in scholarly circles,<sup>25</sup> and so the most important issues will only be briefly discussed here. The question of minority rights in Turkey is both an ethnic and religious one, though these strands are often intertwined. Perhaps the most widely-known example of Turkey's attitudes to minority rights from recent years is the 'Kurdish question.' The Kurdish struggle for recognition, violent as it has sometimes been, is almost exclusively a question of ethnic identity. That is to say, the majority of Kurds belong to Turkey's Sunni Muslim religious majority. On the other hand, there are ethnically Turkish religious groups who are mistreated because of their religious convictions. These groups include the Turkish Protestant churches, as well as minority Muslim groups such as the Alevites. Most minority groups in Turkey, however, are both ethnic and religious. This is most obviously the case with the Armenians and the Greeks, but includes the Assyrians/Syriacs, and so on. Minority status is thus inflicted on groups because of both their ethnicity and religion. Ayla Göl argues that this process played an important part in the development and strengthening of modern Turkish identity after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> To some extent, this may still be the case. In January 2013, the Turkish newspaper *Today's Zaman* reported the fears and anxieties of the Greek community surrounding the negative portrayal of Greek characters on Turkish television. The President and Secretary-General of the Association for the Support of Greek Foundations wrote, 'certain characters displayed on the show lead to discomfort in members of the Greek community who live in Turkey as citizens of this country. All negative characters such as prostitutes, trai-

<sup>25</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe published its most recent report on Turkey on 8th April, 2013, and in June 2011, the EU Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme funded the first notable conference on the Assyrian/Syriac genocide.

<sup>26</sup> Göl, 'Imagining the Turkish Nation through 'Othering' Armenians', p. 137.



tors and collaborators are portrayed as Greeks.<sup>27</sup> Minority status is a complex issue that strengthens the identity of majority groups, and in so doing weakens the social position of minorities. It is not simply a question of religious profession, but also ethnicity and self-identity.

Turkey is theoretically bound by international law to protect the rights of all of her citizens, but the reality has been, and continues to be, much more complicated. The most often discussed document in relation to Turkey's minority rights is the Lausanne Treaty. This treaty was signed in 1923 at the creation of the Turkish Republic. Part of the problem surrounding minority rights in Turkey is the Turkish refusal to consider the various subsequent international laws designed to support minority groups as more binding than the Lausanne Treaty.<sup>28</sup> In many ways, Lausanne more than adequately safeguards the rights of minorities in Turkey, but this treaty has been variously interpreted and misapplied. Turkey is obliged to protect certain individual and group rights. Individual rights include the free exercise of religion (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18; Lausanne, Article 38. Article 43 even says that non-Muslims should not be compelled to any act which constitutes a violation of their faith or religious practices,) and non-discrimination (Lausanne, Articles 38-39; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 26.) Group rights were not really considered in Europe until the 1980s, but because of the Ottoman 'millet' system, they were enshrined in Lausanne.<sup>29</sup> Articles 39-41 enshrine the rights of all minorities to establish, manage and control charitable, religious and social institutions (Article 40) and to use their own languages. Churches, Synagogues and cemeteries are guaranteed protection (Article 42), and matters of personal status and family law are permitted to be settled according to the customs of those minorities concerned (Ar-

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=303026](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=303026)

<sup>28</sup> Kaya and Baldwin, 'Minorities in Turkey', pp. 5-6.

<sup>29</sup> The 'millet' system meant that minority groups in the Ottoman Empire could run fairly self-sufficiently, with a community leader to represent the group to the Sultan.

ticle 42.)<sup>30</sup> That said, in 1932, the Lausanne minority protections were restricted to Greeks, Armenians and Jews, and the Turkish State has persistently neglected the property and educational rights of both these and other groups.<sup>31</sup>

One of the many consequences of this neglect has been the complex negotiations over membership of the E.U. For many, Turkey's human rights record calls into question Turkey's suitability for membership. In February 2013, Turkey's Prime Minister criticised the E.U. for allowing Turkey to wait fifty years for a decision to be made. He suggested that alternatives were being considered, and mentioned the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.<sup>32</sup> This does not seem to have been meant seriously, but later that month a little progress seems to have been made in negotiations with the E.U.<sup>33</sup> For many minority groups, the question of E.U. membership is not an economic one, but is to do with safeguarding the rights of minorities according to international law.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Position of Assyrians/Syriacs in Turkish Society*

The work of Assyrians/Syriacs in the Diaspora has brought attention in the West to the struggles of their people in their 'homeland' (i.e. Tur 'Abdin) and elsewhere in the Middle East. In Tur 'Abdin, there were 200,000 Assyrians/Syriacs in the nineteenth century; by 1920 there were 70,000. Persecution led to large-scale emigration. In 1990 there

<sup>30</sup> This summary of the contents of the Treaty that deal with minority rights is taken from, Hurst, 'The Lausanne Treaty: High Aspirations, Highly Neglected,' in *The Slow Disappearance*, pp. 31-35.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-306001-erdogan-after-50-years-of-waiting-turkey-looking-for-alternatives-to-eu.html>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21572244-many-turks-have-given-up-progress-towards-eu-inches-forward-tiny-thaw>

<sup>34</sup> Yildiz, *The Kurds in Turkey: E.U. Accession and Human Rights* (Pluto Press, 2005); Gabriel, *The EU Accession of Turkey as a chance for Human Rights and Minorities?* (GRIN Verlag, 2011)

were 4000 and now there are only about 2500 left.<sup>35</sup> Levels of persecution have varied from what some consider to be acts of genocide in the aftermath of the First World War (the genocide is known as the 'seyfo,' a Syriac word for 'sword') to false arrests, torture, the confiscation of property and economic discrimination in more recent times.<sup>36</sup>

The history of Assyrian/Syriac Christianity has been the subject of a number of recent and important publications,<sup>37</sup> and so will only briefly be outlined here. It is, in many ways, a rather tragic history given the antiquity of the Syriac rite churches and their major contributions to civilisations all over the world. One might think particularly of the writings of the Syriac saints like Ephrem and Isaac of Nineveh, the role of Syriac scholars in the translation and transmission of Greek knowledge in the Arab world, or the missionary endeavours of the Church of the East that first brought the Gospel to China.

Assyrian/Syriac Christians were first systematically persecuted in the Persian Empire under Shapur II (who ruled 309-379).<sup>38</sup> Sozomen, the Greek historian, suggests that some 16,000 were martyred during Shapur's reign.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, the literature of martyrdom has had a long history in Syriac tradition,<sup>40</sup> and martyrs are commemorated more regularly and with more enthusiasm than in Western church.<sup>41</sup> As a result of the divisions in the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon in

<sup>35</sup> Dalrymple, 'Introduction,' in *The Slow Disappearance*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland*, Orphans in the Diaspora, p. 137; Jenny Thomsen discusses the day-to-day harassment and discrimination faced by Assyrians/Syriacs. Thomsen, *The Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey: A Forgotten People*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>37</sup> Particularly E. Hunter's forthcoming work on the subject.

<sup>38</sup> Of course, Christians were persecuted earlier under the Roman Emperors.

<sup>39</sup> Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.14.

<sup>40</sup> Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, p. 113.

<sup>41</sup> The daily prayers of the Syrian Orthodox Church contain a number of hymns to the saints. The evening office of Monday, 'Ramsho,' contains a hymn with the verse, 'The martyrs saw the Son, who extended his hands on the cross, and surrendered their necks to every torture because of his love.' Griffiths, trans., *The Book of Common Prayer of the Syrian Church*, p. 30.

451, the Syriac-rite, non-Chalcedonian churches in the Byzantium Empire found themselves forced into hiding.<sup>42</sup>

The Arab Conquests were understood by Assyrian/Syriac Christians in apocalyptic terms, as seen in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.<sup>43</sup> Yet despite sporadic persecution, Assyrian/Syriac Christians fared relatively well under the Abbasid caliphs after the rise of Islam in the region, contributing to court life and the transmission of Greek writings.<sup>44</sup> The Mongol Khans came to power after the fall of Baghdad in 1258, and a number of them had Christian mothers and wives.<sup>45</sup> However, the ravages of Tamerlane across the Middle East mark the final decline of Assyrian/Syriac Christianity.<sup>46</sup>

In Ottoman times, the Syriac Orthodox Church was recognised and protected by the 'millet' system. Nevertheless, this was not altogether satisfactory because the Assyrian/Syriac churches were represented to the Sultan by the Armenian Patriarch into the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> The collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to disaster for the Assyrian/Syriac people: in 1915, along with the Armenians and the Pontic Greeks, Assyrians/Syriacs were systematically murdered, an event known as the 'seyfo'.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, some 3,000 Assyrians were killed in the Simele massacre in Iraq in 1933.<sup>49</sup>

These cataclysmic events led to a process of mass emigration to Istanbul, Europe and America, which was furthered by persistent persecution and the Turkish State's conflicts with the PKK.<sup>50</sup> More recently,

<sup>42</sup> Palmer, Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier, pp. 145-146.

<sup>43</sup> Griffiths, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>44</sup> Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq*, p. 86.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>46</sup> Baumer, *The Church of the East*, p. 233.

<sup>47</sup> Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Tamcke, 'The Collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the 'Seyfo' against the Syrians,' in *The Slow Disappearance*, pp. 20-22.

<sup>49</sup> Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East*, p. 320.

<sup>50</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland*, Orphans in the Diaspora, p. 84; Makko, 'Living between the Fronts,' in *The Slow Disappearance*, p. 68.



the government have begun encouraging Assyrians/Syriacs to return to Mardin, but some have voiced reasons to be wary of this.<sup>51</sup> A recent book title by Wilmshurst calls the Church of the East (the East Syrian, so-called 'Nestorian' church) 'the Martyred Church.' The Assyrians/Syriacs are truly a martyred people.

### *Identity Crises in the Assyrian/Syriac Community*

Thomsen's report on the Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey discusses the 'politics of recognition.' She argues that a people's identity is, to a certain extent, shaped by official recognition, or the lack thereof.<sup>52</sup> This is, of course, clearly the case for a wide range of ethnic and religious minority groups in Turkey. 'Non-recognition' or even 'mis-recognition' (as was the case for the Assyrians/Syriacs under the Armenian millet in the Ottoman Empire) is a form of oppression.<sup>53</sup> The struggle for recognition is, therefore, a struggle for liberation and for a full place in society. The Assyrian/Syriac struggle for recognition, however, is not as straightforward as it is for Greek or Armenian minorities in Turkey because there is internal disagreement amongst Assyrians/Syriacs as to the very nature of their ethnic and religious identity.

Naures Atto's work *Hostages in the Homeland*, Orphans in the Diaspora offers, for the first time, a detailed study of the identity crises afflicting the Assyrian/Syriac community. As Atto shows, for the most part contemporary 'identity discourses' (Atto's phrase) amongst the community are framed by the so-called 'Name Debate.' There is a tension that arises from a kind of secular nationalism (broadly understood) amongst Assyrians/Syriacs about the self-designation of the 'amo Suryoyo,' the Assyrian/Syriac people.<sup>54</sup> The central issue is about how the Syriac word 'Suryoyo' is to be understood. For some, the identity of

<sup>51</sup> Onder, 'Minority Rights in Turkey,' in *The Slow Disappearance*, p. 103.

<sup>52</sup> Thomsen, *The Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey: A Forgotten People*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, pp. 13, 263-269.

the 'amo Suryoyo' is clearly in the pre-Christian, Assyrian past, and so 'Suryoyo' is to be translated as 'Assyrian' or the Swedish 'Assyrier' in diaspora communities. For others, 'Suryoyo' is to be understood as a link to an Aramean past, and so should be translated as 'Syriac,' 'Syrian,' 'Aramean,' or Swedish 'Syrier.' This might seem to be a fairly minor point of contention, but the debate has caused huge divisions in the Assyrian/Syriac community.<sup>55</sup> The Church has tended to oppose the term 'Assyrian' but this was taken up by a number of important secular organisations.<sup>56</sup> Neither position has won out, and the two factions are represented by a two-fold diocesan structure in Sweden.<sup>57</sup> In 1980 the tension even led to the murder of Aslan Noyan by members of the 'Assyrian' faction in Stockholm.<sup>58</sup> More trivially, this is a struggle constantly replayed in the Swedish football league; Assyriska FF and Syrianska FC are rivals whose matches are watched all over the world.<sup>59</sup>

This particular issue is clearly the outworking of a number of unresolved tensions in the community. Behind the 'Name Debate' lies the conflict between traditional and secular ideologies, particularly with regard to the control of the clergy and the influence of the church boards, but it also stems from a sense of having been uprooted from the homeland. The process of settling in countries across Europe meant that Assyrian/Syriac communities have had to renegotiate intense questions of identity, and this process continues into the present day. It is unfortunate that these debates have historically manifested themselves in such a divisive, factional and petty way.

The 'Name debate,' therefore, is symptomatic of the crisis of identity in Assyrian/Syriac communities across the world. Contemporary identity discourses are, consequently, to be seen unavoidably in the

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 323-392 for an extensive discussion of the antagonism between the factions involved in the Swedish community.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 332.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 335-336.

<sup>59</sup> Rommel, 'Assyrians or Syriacs? Middle Eastern Identity Formation through Football,' in *Middle East Institute: Sports and the Middle East*, pp. 21-22.

context of this debate, which after all has been raging since at least the 1950s amongst the American and Canadian diaspora communities.<sup>60</sup> Despite this, the debate is the preserve of a particular multi-lingual group who have connections with Assyrian/Syriac groups in the Diaspora. One interviewee stated that while the Church's official line understands its heritage to be Aramean and not Assyrian, this is not a major feature of self-understanding amongst the community in Istanbul because most people simply see themselves as 'Süryani,' the standard Turkish translation of 'Suryoyo.'

Another correspondent told me that the Assyrian/Syriac community in Istanbul was generally apathetic on this issue. He felt that for many, church attendance is a sufficient identity marker. His concern was that ultimately this would lead to a loss of identity as the members of his community become Christian Turks, and cease to be Assyrians/Syriacs at all.

### *Secularism, 'Nationalism,' and the Challenges Facing the Community*

At its heart, the 'Name Debate' is about the process of secularisation amongst the Assyrian/Syriac communities of the diaspora. It is, however, a mistake to assume that secularisation originated with those diaspora communities. Men like Naum Faik (1868-1930) and Ashur Yousif (1858-1915,) both of whom were members of the Syrian Orthodox Church and born in what is now modern Turkey, are celebrated as the

<sup>60</sup> In 1952, the Patriarch ruled that the 'amo Suryoyo' are to be understood as Aramean and not Assyrian. The role of the clergy was essential at this stage of the debate. Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, p. 289.

fathers of a kind of Assyrian/Syriac nationalism.<sup>61</sup> This 'nationalism' ('umthonoyutho' in Syriac) has been defined by Atto as a love for the Assyrian/Syriac people, language, culture, history, and so on.<sup>62</sup> There is a clearly secular dimension to this, and in leftist discourse, it seems to mean a struggle for rights and survival.<sup>63</sup> This is clearly seen in the establishment of the Assyrian Democratic Organisation: the ADO arose in Syria in 1957, with an openly political character, as a response to pan-Arabism.<sup>64</sup> It worked underground in Turkey in the 1970s; and was shut down after the military coup in 1980.<sup>65</sup> The organisation registered in Sweden in the 1990s, and there is an increasing diversity of groups that have been set up by the ADO, which have been essential for promoting awareness of the Assyrians/Syriacs as an ethnic group.<sup>66</sup>

This ethnic understanding of the 'amo suryoyo' is perhaps best seen in attitudes to three particular groups, the Syrian Orthodox Christians of India, members of the Church of the East and the 'Mhalmoye' (Assyrians/Syriacs who converted to Islam in the seventeenth century.) Of these groups, only the Church of the East is widely considered to belong to the 'amo suryoyo,' whereas Syrian Orthodox Christians in India are considered to be of the same church but not the same

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 272-279. Naum Faik is commemorated by Assyrians/Syriacs on 5th February each year. He wrote a famous poem, 'Awake, son of Assyria, Awake,'

'Awake, son of Assyria,

Awake and see the world how enlightened.

The chance is fleeing from us

And time is running out

Awake son of Assyria, Awake!

In vengeance you will take refuge.

Rise up and band together to strengthen.

And if one does not awake we have lost our chance

Without a purpose, misfortune will befall our land.'

<http://christiansofiraq.com/reply2.html>. Accessed 16/03/2013.

<sup>62</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, p. 265.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290, 293.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302, 309.



people.<sup>67</sup> This suggests an ethnic rather than denominational understanding of identity. Similarly, and perhaps surprisingly, a small minority consider the 'Mhalmoye' to belong to the 'amo suryoyo' and this is clearly driven by a particular ethnic rather than religious ideology.<sup>68</sup>

This secular idea of 'umthonoyutho' can also be seen in the work of organisations like Mezo-Der in Istanbul. Jenny Thomsen's report highlights some of the cultural activities that this group has organised for young people.<sup>69</sup> In 2011, Mezo-Der published a book on Assyrian/Syriac folk dancing and music, which promotes these and other aspects of Assyrian/Syriac culture.<sup>70</sup>

Whilst 'umthonoyutho' is accepted and understood as important by committed lay members of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Istanbul, it has been rejected by the clergy and the hierarchy. Over the course of my meeting with Metropolitan Yusuf Çetin, I suggested Atto's broad definition of 'umthonoyutho' as a love for Assyrian/Syriac culture. He translated it directly as 'nationalism,' and told me that it is impossible to mix nationalism and faith.

Despite this, however, both the ecclesiastically and secular minded people with whom I spoke emphasised two important issues. The first of these is the survival of the Syriac language, and the second is the place of the 'homeland' and the continuity of the Assyrian/Syriac people in that region. Only a couple of people mentioned the recognition of the 'seyfo' as a significant issue for the community. One stressed that the Church does not want to talk about it, but that it is very important to the community. He referred to a number of articles on the 'seyfo' in the monthly Syriac/Turkish journal Sabro ('hope.') The other talked about the importance of recognising the 'seyfo' if anything was going to change in Turkey. Annually, on 24th April, the 'seyfo' is commemorated by Assyrians/Syriacs all over the world. In Istanbul in recent

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 438, 456.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 458.

<sup>69</sup> Thomsen, *The Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey: A Forgotten People*, p. 24.

<sup>70</sup> Kurnaz, *Süryani Halkoyunları ve Ezgileri*, (Gerçeğe Doğru Kitapları, 2011.)

years an event has taken place in Taksim Square, and a growing number of people attend. It is hoped that questions around the genocide will be raised in the Turkish press in 2015, on the centenary of the atrocities. I deliberately did not press this issue because of its sensitivity, but the reluctance to talk about the 'seyfo' is also apparent from Jenny Thomsen's work in Istanbul.<sup>71</sup> This reflects the specific political context and vulnerability of Assyrians/Syriacs in Turkey; this issue is much more freely discussed in the diaspora.<sup>72</sup>

All of my correspondents agreed that there were relatively few people who could speak Syriac, although Metropolitan Yusuf drew the distinction between the ecclesiastical and vernacular forms of the language. There are also few who can teach Syriac. Great stress was placed on the inability to teach Syriac in schools. The community recently had permission for a kindergarten in which to teach Syriac rejected by the Turkish Education Ministry. The argument for the rejection was made on the grounds that the Assyrians/Syriacs are not defined as a minority by the State's interpretation of the Lausanne Treaty.<sup>73</sup> Syriac is unofficially taught in the monasteries, and through the liturgies of the Church. For the most part, children go to state schools throughout the week, and there are Saturday schools for those preparing to go to university, so the Church finds that young people do not have much time, but there are attempts to teach Syriac and Assyrian/Syriac culture when possible. This challenge also extends to the education of clergy, who have to train away in the monasteries in the South-East of Turkey, or in Damascus. This is not unique to Turkey, however. Once when I was visiting the Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in London, I was informed that the new deacons being trained (young Iraqi men) had to read Syriac in Arabic script during the liturgy, because they could not read Syriac.

<sup>71</sup> Thomsen, *The Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey: A Forgotten People*, p. 27.

<sup>72</sup> The Seyfo Centre website, for instance, is contactable at a German address.

<http://www.seyfocenter.com/index.php?sid=9>. Accessed 16/03/2013.

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=289746](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=289746). Accessed 16/03/2013.

The troubles facing the monastery of Mor Gabriel, and the continuing Christian presence in the South-East of Turkey are issues that affect the Assyrian/Syriac community in Istanbul (and the diaspora) quite deeply. Metropolitan Yusuf mentioned his close work with the four other Metropolitans in Turkey, and a number of people with whom I spoke were originally from Mardin before they moved to Istanbul. There are also ties of kinship which bind people to this symbolic heartland of Assyrian/Syriac Christianity. Whilst I was in Istanbul, Metropolitan Yusuf travelled to Sweden with the Turkish President. An interviewee in Turkey told me that the community in Sweden was anxious to use this trip as an opportunity to voice concerns over two particular issues. The first of these was the 'seyfo' and the second was to do with the land of Mor Gabriel.

The idea of 'homeland' is hugely significant. A documentary produced in 2009 followed the visit for the first time of a young man to the village in Tur 'Abdin where his parents had lived before the emigrated to Switzerland. He travels with his father and stays with his grandparents. It is clearly very important to him. The young man talks with local people about their history and culture, and he is deeply moved by the experience. Towards the end of the documentary, he notes that as long as his father's generation is alive, there will be people to return to Tur 'Abdin, but he could not see himself living there. He says that they must hope young people no longer feel that they must leave, for political or economic reasons. The survival of a Christian presence in Tur 'Abdin is by no means certain.<sup>74</sup>

One of the primary tensions in the wider Assyrian/Syriac community is the relationship between its older and younger members. The symbolic status of the 'homeland' and many older people's memory of life in Tur 'Abdin result in an emphasis on a more traditional and village way of life. One correspondent noted that many young people in the

<sup>74</sup> *Legacy of Silence*, directed by Ambrosi and Soergel. Amika Films Productions, 2009. <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/9106/Legacy-of-Silence>. Accessed 21/03/2013.

cities found this to be quite alien and do not relate to the clergy or their older family members in the way that is expected of them.

Concerning Mor Gabriel, however, there are signs of hope. There is increasing international pressure on Turkey concerning the legal status of Mor Gabriel's lands, and one of my correspondents referred to a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Tur 'Abdin in the week before I arrived in Istanbul. Similarly, a meeting took place in Ankara between Foreign Ministry Officials and the four Syrian Orthodox Metropolitans of Turkey, in part to discuss the support of Assyrians/Syriacs fleeing Syria to Turkey.<sup>75</sup> Dialogue is beginning to take place.

Despite quite different ideologies, both the clergy and the more secular-minded of the Assyrian/Syriac community in Istanbul agree on the importance of language and education in the preservation of Assyrian/Syriac heritage and culture. The 'Name debate' highlights a particular crisis of identity which has been, and continues to be, damaging and divisive. Nevertheless, the Assyrians/Syriacs with whom I spoke were united in the face of severe challenges to their future.

### *The Role of the Church*

There is no doubt that in the last sixty years, there has been a rise in more secular, ethnically-focused identity discourses amongst the Assyrian/Syriac communities in the Middle East and the Diaspora. The Syrian Orthodox Church, knowingly or not, has an important role in all this. Some of the Church's involvement has been politically motivated, and the institutional church has often tried to exercise control in difficult and antagonistic circumstances. It is in this context that the two-fold diocesan structure was established in Sweden representing the dif-

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-foreign-ministry-to-meet-syriacleaders.aspx?pageID=238&nID=42858&NewsCatID=338>. Accessed 01/04/2013



ferent factions involved, and it is in this context that excommunication has been used as a threat by the clergy.<sup>76</sup>

There has been dissatisfaction with the Church hierarchy.<sup>77</sup> Since 1995, eighty Assyrian/Syriac families have joined the Baptist Church in Södertälje, Sweden.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, there have been calls to establish a secular leadership that would take the form of a board of representatives or a parliament and President to create a sort of transnational nation.<sup>79</sup>

To some extent, these attempts at the division of religious and secular spheres have been much more successful in the Diaspora than in Istanbul and the 'homeland.' The hierarchy in Istanbul still exercises a considerable amount of influence and control amongst the Assyrian/Syriac community, no doubt reflecting the political sensitivity surrounding Assyrian/Syriac activism in Turkey. One correspondent told me that when Turkey's first Assyrian/Syriac member of parliament was elected, the Board members of the Cathedral gave interviews in the national press rejecting this man because of his involvement in Mezo-Der. The complex socio-religious environment in Turkey has clearly led to divisions in the community, and the Church, perhaps optimistically, sees its role as a unifying force.

The Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in Istanbul does, however, run an extensive social and educational programme for its members, particularly its young people. There are language classes, special services, cultural events and trips, all of which are well attended by people who are clearly committed to preserving their cultural heritage. The Church is the only place in Turkish society where Syriac can survive as a language and, however imperfectly, the Church tries to make Syriac as widely understood as possible. While I was in Istanbul, there was even a seminar at one of the universities on Syriac sacred music by an eminent

<sup>76</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, pp. 347, 370.

<sup>77</sup> One of the men to whom I spoke in Istanbul is an ordained deacon, but has a complicated relationship with the Church because of what he perceives to be apathy and assimilatory politics.

<sup>78</sup> Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora*, p. 474.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 481-482.

Assyrian/Syriac musicologist, Gabriel Aydin.<sup>80</sup> Metropolitan Yusuf is personally very keen to prevent young people from breaking their ties with the Church. One of the people with whom I spoke mentioned the importance of the Church's role in helping young people to find other suitable (Syrian Orthodox) young people to marry.

It is clear that the problems facing the Church are real. The Church hierarchy in Istanbul has been very good at denying a problem exists (as might be seen in the example of 'seyfo' recognition.) Nevertheless, this Church seeks to emphasise its faithfulness to a very ancient form of Christianity. It is proud that its language is the closest surviving relative of the language Jesus spoke, and the see of Antioch claims its apostolic descent from Peter. Much would be lost if this Church were to disappear from its ancient home in the Middle East.

## Conclusion

What does the future hold for this Church? Teule has noted that the Assyrian/Syriac communities of the diaspora are now a permanent reality, and that one of the primary problems for the future will be the tension between the clergy in the homeland and the more secular-minded lay elites in the Diaspora.<sup>81</sup> My time in Istanbul has certainly shown me that this is the case. Nevertheless, there is a danger in assuming the process of secularisation is the direct result of Western influences on the diaspora communities. As was the case with Naum Faik, and continues to be so amongst some of the Assyrians/Syriacs that I met in Istanbul, a more secular self-identity does not exclude a commitment to the Syrian Orthodox Church. There has been a fear of secularism and a fear of upsetting the status quo in a sensitive socio-political context, but the Syrian Orthodox Church needs to recommit to its engagement with

<sup>80</sup> 21/03/2013 at Istanbul Technical University. Aydin is working on making Syriac sacred chants accessible in Western notation, as the Syriac tradition has not historically used a system of notation.

<sup>81</sup> Teule, 'Who are the Syriacs?' in *The Slow Disappearance*, p. 56.

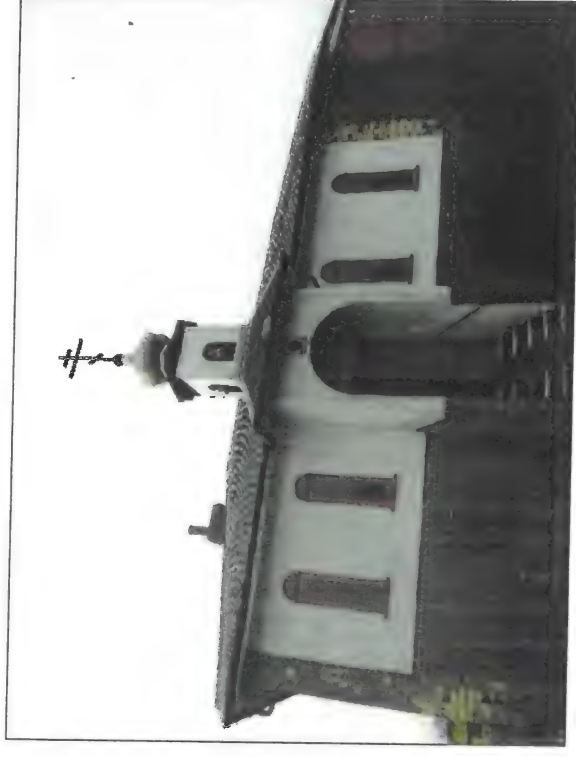
its people. It is the ark in which has survived the Syriac language, and two thousand years of religious and cultural traditions against many persistent and destructive floods. The young secularists of the Assyrian/Syriac community in Istanbul do not want to see the end of the Church, but want a strong leadership to stand up for their rights as citizens of Turkey. They want the Church to be a strong rock, and so the Syrian Orthodox Church would do well to remember Jesus' words to the first Patriarch of Antioch:

*'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.'*

(Matthew 16.18.)

## A History of St Seraphim's Chapel, Walsingham

SYLVIA BATCHELOR



MARK MEYRICK (later Fr David) came from Wiltshire, from a family of Anglican priests going back over 200 years who are believed to descend from St Cadwaladar. Leon Liddament was from Norwich, his family descended from Flemish weavers. Mark had visited the Orthodox Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky in Paris by chance in 1952 and was captivated by the beauty of the Nativity service taking place. In 1963, Mark, who had recently converted to Orthodoxy and decided to become a priest, was given the choice of studying for a year either at St Serge in Paris or with Archimandrite Lazarus in India. Mark chose the latter and Leon decided to accompany him.

On his return from India Father Mark was ordained Deacon on October 24th 1965 and on April 24th 1966 he was ordained Priest, both by Bishop Nikodem. As Father Mark he began serving in London, Not-

tingham and Bradford, and was awarded the Gold Cross for his services. The move to Walsingham came in 1966, when the Administrator of the Anglican Shrine sent a message to Bishop Nikodem asking that monks be sent to Walsingham to care for the little Orthodox Church there, but he had no monks to spare. During the summer of 1966 the missionary Brotherhood of St Seraphim of Sarov was formed with the blessing of Bishop Nikodem and one of its duties was to care for the Orthodox Chapel in Walsingham. Father Mark continued to serve in London Nottingham and Bradford.

They moved to Walsingham on December 6th 1966 with £25 capital and an ancient London taxi for transport. The Shrine Chapel was unsuitable for regular worship because of the open plan, but the derelict railway station proved to be the only property the Brotherhood could afford to rent. They continued to care for the little chapel and hold some services there. The Administrator of the Anglican Shrine, Canon Colin Stephenson, lent the Brotherhood a cottage to live while the work of renovating and altering the station went on, and on August 1st 1967 Bishop Nikodem came and blessed the Brotherhood Church and dedicated it to St Seraphim of Sarov. After the Liturgy Bishop Nikodem led a procession down to the Shrine Chapel where an Akathist to the Mother of God was sung.

Several new members joined the brotherhood for short periods of time during the next few years. Fr Mark continued to serve every weekend either in London or in Nottingham. Archbishop Nikon brought the miraculous Kursk icon to Walsingham during this period. Painting icons and mounting icon prints were the primary means of income for the Brotherhood. The stream of visiting pilgrims of all denominations who wanted to speak with an Orthodox priest made it difficult for them to carry out their work, and so in 1970 they rented two cottages seven miles away at Dunton. They would go to Walsingham every day for Matins and Vespers, however, in 1973 the dramatic rise in the cost of petrol made it impractical to visit Walsingham daily, so a small chapel was built at Dunton and dedicated to St George, though Walsingham was used at

weekends. By 1976 the congregation in Walsingham had reached 50 souls.

Early in 1978 Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh received them under his Omophor. Metropolitan Anthony visited Walsingham and served the Liturgy in St Seraphim's Church on 5th November 1978. In 1980 Metropolitan Anthony made Father Mark a monk and gave him the name of David. Dunton became a 'skete-monastery', and St Seraphim's became a monastic church.

From the early days, as well as iconography the Brotherhood had undertaken the printing of Fr Lazarus Moore's English Translations of the Orthodox services. An Orthodox nun, Mother Seraphima, was resident at the Dunton monastery for fifteen years and became an important part of the small community. Coming from a printing background, Mother Seraphima arrived with her printing press and played an important role in printing the Orthodox services in English and in publishing information about the Orthodox faith and St Seraphim's and supported the activity of the Brotherhood.

In 1982 Metropolitan Anthony made Hieromonk David Hegumen of the monastery at Dunton, and Archimandrite in 1987. Throughout this time the Fr David and Leon had painted icons continuously for churches and individuals all over the world. When Fr David died in 1993 Leon continued the tradition of iconography at St Seraphim's until his own death in 2010.

Many Orthodox were first introduced to Orthodoxy by attending services at St Seraphim's under the guidance of Fr David, and hold a particular fondness for the Chapel with its rich Orthodox heritage and constant presence over the years. These supporters are kept informed of the developments at the Chapel through the Trust's newsletter and contribute to its upkeep through regular donations.

The Chapel is visited regularly by school groups in connection with the Anglican Shrine's education department. Groups also come independently in the knowledge that the Chapel is open daily. The Trust is finding the best way to monitor and communicate with self-led



groups. The groups brought by the Anglican Shrine Education department compare the interior of the Chapel with that of the Methodist Chapel in the Friday Market Place.

The Chapel is also visited by people in the region who originate from Orthodox Countries such as Greece, Russia or other countries in Eastern Europe. The Russian style exterior of the Chapel offers a sense of familiarity and many individuals will come regularly to light candles for their families or their departed friends and relatives.

### *St Seraphim's Trust Heritage*



*Icon of St Seraphim*

The Heritage Lottery Fund project addresses all aspects of the site, which include the building, garden and collection. These aspects of the Trust property embody a dual heritage. The first aspect is the building's current use as an Orthodox Chapel and the Orthodox Christian heritage that has developed since the building's conversion in 1967. The Chapel is Byzantine in style, designed in the traditions of the Orthodox Church with curved walls, a dome, and an iconostasis separating the nave from the altar.

An onion dome and bell tower above the entrance of the Chapel were also added as part of the Russian tradition.

Complementing the Chapel is the Trust's collection of Orthodox icons and related icon painting materials, produced by the two Iconog-

raphers who founded the chapel and who made Walsingham a centre for iconography in the UK in the 45 years they worked there. The Trust is also in possession of a large amount of archival material relating to the development of the Chapel, the development of other Churches locally and the growth of Orthodoxy in this country. This material spans the whole period, beginning with the Chapel's founder's early training in India with Archimandrite Lazarus Moore.

The second aspect comprises the industrial railway heritage evident in the Trust's property, a former railway station with a complete platform, and various features in the garden including a railway worker's hut and heritage fruit trees. The trust is also in possession of artefacts relating to the railway and has begun an Oral History project collecting local memories of the railway days and of pilgrimage.

The development of the land adjoining the Chapel into a community garden is a central part of the Trust's aims to improve access to its heritage and involve volunteers in the site. The Garden has several heritage features which complement the building and collection, and funding is secured to develop these and improve facilities.

### *The Project*

The primary aim of the project is to conserve and share the dual heritage outlined above. In order to accomplish this aim the project will include:

#### *Centre for Iconography*

Creating the opportunity for the ancient religious art heritage to reach a wider audience by developing a centre for the study, teaching and practice of iconography. This will involve cataloguing and conserving the icons and ensuring the collection can be safely displayed to the public with interpretation.

### *Centre for railway heritage*

Revealing to visitors the unique railway heritage involved in being the former "Pilgrim Station" located on the "Pilgrims' Way" walk, also a County Wildlife site, by providing access to the building, platform and land, developing railway interpretation and carrying out an Oral History project in the local area and collecting memories from pilgrims who came by train.

### *Conservation and repairs*

Repairing and maintaining the building and platform and preserving the 45 year old Orthodox Chapel which was carefully constructed in the tradition of Orthodox Christian architecture, a style which remains little changed from its origins in Byzantium, and holds an important place in the growth of Orthodox Christianity in the UK.

### *Access*

Improving as wide a range of access as possible. This will involve improving physical access throughout the entire site and providing intellectual and emotional access to the heritage by interpreting the information and artefacts in the Trust's care relating to the history of Christianity in a way which is inclusive to all. It is also planned to provide formal and informal learning opportunities for exploring the heritage and to create spaces suitable for public activities

### *Community Garden*

Developing the land adjoining the building into a community garden. This will include aspects which reflect the other heritage being developed, such as Celtic features relating to the history and symbolism of Early British Christianity and the conservation of railway features already in place. These developments will enhance the local conservation

area surrounding the land and property. The Trust will endeavour to involve the local community in the development of the garden through media exposure, events and activities.

### *Volunteering*

Setting out a volunteer development plan which will consider how the heritage is shared and maintained.



*The Author praying in the Chapel*



## Eastern Travel Guides 2: Ethiopia

JAMES BUXTON

FOR MANY of us the word 'Ethiopia' produces a gallery of ghastly mental images. Burnt-out landscapes, war, starving children, and generally abject poverty. Like most stereotypes these images are not altogether without foundation. The level of development lags behind most of the rest of Africa (though economic growth has been surprisingly strong in recent years), and a great proportion of the population continue to be subsistence farmers. Hunger (though not on the scale of the notorious famine of 1984) is never far from some parts of the country, and the level of education, though growing, is still very low. But beyond the stereotypes there is a wondrous land of spectacular landscapes, welcoming people, amazing wildlife, utterly distinctive cultures (Christian, Muslim and Animist) but above all, an intact late antique church: The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its incredible inheritance in tradition, spirituality, liturgy, monasticism, art and architecture. Don't call it Coptic! The Ethiopians have never called their Church Coptic, although they only severed the formal link with Coptic Egypt in 1959, when the Church decided it would no longer take its patriarch from a monastery in Egypt as it had done for the previous seventeen hundred years. More importantly it is totally different in outlook, language, liturgy and scale.

### *Background*

To begin with, it is far bigger numerically. Consider the figures. There are about 90 million Ethiopians of whom about half are thought to be Christian and half Muslim (these figures may be hotly debated by Ethiopians). Of the Christians the majority are Ethiopian Orthodox, though a surprising 14 million are said to be Protestant, of various denominations and movements. The Orthodox Christian population is concentrated in the mountainous central and northern uplands, and

north of the border in independent Eritrea (not so easy to visit). The Ethiopian Church has been inextricably linked with the history of the Ethiopian nation since the conversion of King Ezana of Aksum in the mid fourth century. The monarchy survived until 1974, when the last Emperor, Haile Selassie was deposed (and later murdered) by Mengistu Haile-Mariam, the leader of a revolutionary party, known as the Derg ('The Committee') which held power until 1987.

### *Church and Monastic Life*



The Church has had a profound effect on Ethiopian culture, and remains an incredibly important part of the fabric of life in the cities as well as in rural areas. It differs substantially from other Orthodox traditions: One of its most marked features is its pre-occupation with Judaism and the Old Testament. One priest told me 'Our Ethiopian Orthodox Church was founded centuries before the birth of Christ'. This seems like a strange thing to say, but not to Ethiopians, who believe that the nation came about

because of the union of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and their son Menelik, who is seen as the first Ethiopian monarch. Ethiopian Christians believe that the Ark of the Covenant (which went missing from Israel during the Exile) still exists and that the Tablets of the Law are kept safe in a sacred building in the northern capital of Aksum (see below). Ethiopian churches are seen as a symbolic representation of Jerusalem with a Holy of Holies in



the centre of the building. The Altar in an Ethiopian church (never seen by the laity) contains a Tabot. This is a representation of the Commandments on stone or wood. It is a consecrated Tabot which makes a church holy. Numerous traditions surrounding rites of passage, food and ritual emphasise the profoundly Semitic character of Ethiopian Orthodoxy.

There are many tens of thousands of Ethiopian monks and hermits (and some nuns, but not many by comparison). Don't think cloisters, refectories, guest houses and smart monastics in shiny black shoes chanting the offices as a choir. Do think desert spirituality, combat with the powers and principalities, communities of monks living in caves and shacks in forests, on islands, on precipitous mountain peaks, in wild and remote areas, living in great poverty and simplicity.

### *Visiting Ethiopia*

Given its obscurity, Ethiopia is a relatively easy country to visit. Roads between the main places where visitors are likely to want to go are now very good (with a little help from the Chinese). Ethiopian Airlines is an excellent carrier (with a good safety record) which provides flights between all the main centres inside the country. Otherwise, public transport is not that reliable. This means that most people interested in exploring Ethiopian culture and church life are likely to want to go as part of organised trips operated by a local agent. Hotels of varying grades exist in all the main towns, with intermediate level being perfectly adequate for groups. Although some remoter parts of the country are in a state of continual unrest, the central areas where visitors go are very safe. Tourists need to look out for pick-pockets in the main towns, but dangerous criminal activity towards foreigners is very rare indeed. The roads are not exactly safe, but heavy traffic is almost unknown outside Addis Ababa (the only place where an appreciable number of people have private cars). Ethiopian food is delicious, though often an acquired taste. It is heavily reliant on injera a kind of flatbread made from a

slightly fermented runny dough. This in term is made from teff, a unique Ethiopian grain. It is served with very hot sauce called watt. In all the tourist centres simple rice and pasta dishes are also available. As with all travel in the developing world, tummy upset is part of the landscape. Ethiopia is not fixed up for the less-abled traveller. Elderly people will struggle at some of the key sights. This needs to be borne in mind when advertising group trips.

### *What to see in Ethiopia*

The following places are on most tourists' itineraries, and cover the aspects of Ethiopia that are of particular interest to people who wish to experience the Ethiopian Church.



*Lalibela's Rock-Hewn Churches*

The undisputed crown of Ethiopian architecture are the fourteen magnificent churches carved entirely out of rock in the 12th century, under the rule of (and according to tradition by the hand of) the eponymous monarch-saint. Lalibela warrants two full days to have a full guided tour of the churches and to see them in a more relaxed way on a return visit. An early morning visit to see the liturgy and other devo-

tions taking place is highly recommended. It is not that easy to see the liturgy in action in regular parish churches, so Lalibela is an excellent place to get this experience. A trek/mule ride to the nearby monastery of Asheton Mariam is a very good thing to do. An hour's drive away one may visit Yemrehana Christos, where an ancient church is located inside a cave – one of the few places where centuries old 'built' rather than carved church may be seen. Lalibela is, in my experience, the best place to purchase Ethiopian crosses (processional and pectoral) and icons at reasonable prices.

#### *Babar Dar's Island Monasteries*

This provincial capital on the southern shore of Lake Tana (source of the Blue Nile) is worth visiting as it is the port of access to the marvelous island monasteries in the lake. It is worth taking a full day for an excursion on the lake. However, do note that some monasteries may only be seen by men. The little tropical islands are enchanting. There are ancient round churches with lovely frescoes where monks will show you monastery treasures such as crosses and manuscripts. The monasteries date from 13th century, and have estates on the shore where some of the monks are stationed to do the farming that supplies the monasteries with food. Blue Nile falls are an hour's drive away. This is probably worth doing in or very close to the rainy season, and bear in mind it is a half hour up-hill walk to see the view of the falls.

#### *Gondar's Palaces, Churches and Religious Schools*

Gondar is an important centre of the Ethiopian Church. Most famous is the church of Debre Birhan Selassie (Trinity and Mountain of Light) which is famed for its beautiful examples of Ethiopian church art. The former imperial palaces, now in ruins, are spectacular. There are many religious schools in Gondar where boys and young men are engaged in religious education. By arrangement (see below) it is sometimes possible to see the church disciplines of K'nae (rhetoric) and the distinctive re-



ligious dance which is performed by the Debera (an order of trained lay men, distinctive to Ethiopian Orthodoxy). Gondar is also famous for its Timkat (Epiphany) and Meskel (finding the True Cross) celebrations, which draw terrific crowds. Gondar is close to the Simien Mountains (about three hours' drive) which many tourists make part of their visit to Ethiopia.

#### *Aksum*

For centuries, Aksum was where Ethiopian emperors were crowned. Aksum is of immense spiritual significance for Ethiopians. It is here that the Ark of the Covenant and the Tablets of the Law are believed to be kept (neither of which may ever be viewed). There are also spectacular pre-Christian Aksumite obelisks and ruins. Aksum also gives access (in the mountains on either side of the road to Makele) to a large number of rock-hewn churches and monasteries. Many of them were documented by my late father (David Buxton) during his time in Ethiopia (1942-1949). They include the astonishing monastery of Debre Damo which can only be approached by ascending a cliff (the monks will haul you up on a chord made from leather pieces which have been stitched together). The monastery occupies a table-top mountain at the centre of which is a spectacular 11th century church. This monastery is not open to women.



### *Addis Ababa*

Addis Ababa is the modern capital of Ethiopia. There are no antiquities here but Christian visitors will appreciate a visit to the Cathedral, Entoto Hill (where there are two grand 19th century churches which are occasionally open), and the museums, including a fine collection of Ethiopian religious art.

### *Planning Your Visit*

It is possible to see all of the areas mentioned in a rather rushed 10 day trip, utilising internal flights, but these pile on the cost. I have experience of a three week trip, utilising an expedition bus and not involving flights. This is substantially less expensive, but involves some incredibly long drives. You do however get to see the amazing Ethiopian landscape. The rains stop in mid-September, and from then until the end of



January is the best time to visit. In the earlier part of that period the landscape is green and lush and temperatures are low. Later it all gets rather scorched. If organising a group visit of any size, you will find it useful to engage the services of a specialist travel agency. I recommend Silk Steps who would be glad to advise, or to arrange individual or group travel ([www.silksteps.co.uk](http://www.silksteps.co.uk)).

### *Advice and Guide Books*

I recommend the Bradt Guide to Ethiopia. It has good general coverage, and excellent information about the Church and its antiquities. My father's book *The Abyssinians* (Thames and Hudson) continues to be a good guide to the Ethiopian church, society, art and architecture – if you can get it. It is not in print but sometimes appears online or in libraries. Philip Marsden's *The Chains of Heaven* is an atmospheric account of a journey the author made in 2005. Readers who would like to speak about visiting Ethiopia are welcome to contact me ([jb225@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jb225@cam.ac.uk)). Canon Dr John Binns (Vicar of Great St Mary's, Cambridge) is a real expert though and is always happy to advise on visiting Ethiopia. We can also suggest ways of engaging with the social justice and development challenges which Ethiopia faces.



## Book Reviews

DIMITRIS SALAPATAS

*Journey to the Kingdom: An Insider's Look at the Liturgy and Beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, Vassilios Papavassiliou, £15.99, Paraclete Press, 2012, ISBN: 978-1-61261-164-8

*Protbeoria of the Biolakes Typikon* (translated by Konstantinos Terzopoulos), £10.00, Orthodox Research Institute, 2011 ISBN: 978-1-933275-58-1

THIS NEW book, the *Journey to the Kingdom*, claims to be an insider's look at the Liturgy and beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, it is much more; in order to explain the Divine Liturgy he inevitably is forced to explain other Sacraments, such as Baptism (Chapter 14) in order to further explain the Creed, which is part of the Liturgy. The illustrations and the explanations give a further interest in order to comprehend the Divine Mysteries, given to us through the ages by the Church Fathers and our Holy Tradition.

Every book needs to understand its audience, who will read this book? This book seems to be a continuation of Fr. Vassilios' catechetical work. It is a book for both those who wish to learn more about the Eastern Orthodox Church and eventually become its member, but also it is a great introduction for those who are already members of the Orthodox Tradition but who are, in many ways, catechumens. Currently

the Church, worldwide, does not only have catechumens outside its body, but also within it, which it needs to identify and teach. This book is a first step in achieving a better understanding of the faith, the dogmas, the Creed, Christology, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Liturgy, the Tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

It will be a surprise to many that this book does not contrast its beliefs to other Churches, such as the Roman Catholic, the Anglican or Protestant Traditions. It is a book on Orthodoxy, where Orthodoxy explains itself through its own course and life, through the ages since its beginning, where the Church Fathers formed and explained the ecclesiastical dogmas and traditions. Anyone within the sphere of Ecumenical Relations should read this book in order to better understand the Orthodox Church, its beliefs, its ecclesiastical practices. Many questions raised at inter-Christian meetings are answered here.

This book explains step by step what we observe when we take part in the Divine Liturgy. It is an invitation "to come in and see how Orthodox Christians all over the world worship" (p.1). It gives the reader and the partaker of the Divine Liturgy to "have a foretaste of the life of God's Kingdom" (p. 143).

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Orthodoxy has been spreading and has been evolving within the Anglo-Saxon world. It is, therefore, inevitable that many of the works produced in the East have been and continue to be translated into the English language. The *Protbeoria of the Biolakes Typikon* is a book which provides the English speaking reader a general outline of the structure of the mysteries and services as they should be appropriately ordered for use within all the Orthodox parishes world-wide; hence the 'axis', i.e. the Order, of the Divine Mysteries of the Ecclesia forms the guidelines for the services during the whole year.

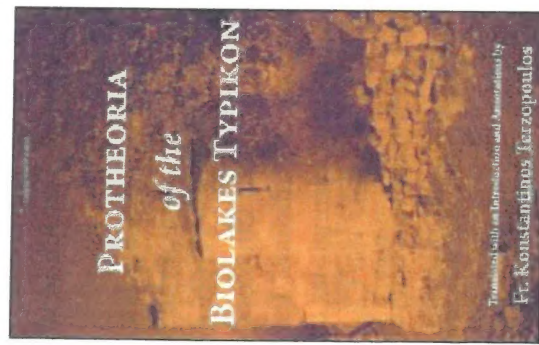
It is the first time that a work like this is produced in English, being a translation of the 1888 Patriarchal edition of the Ecclesiastical



Typikon of the Great Church of Christ, Constantinople. "The goal of the present translation of the Protheoria of the Typikon is to bring to the English reader a general overview of the actual structure of the services as they are to be properly ordered for use in the parishes" (p. v). In 1880 a seven member Synodal Committee was commissioned by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Protopsaltes Georgios Biolakes was a member of this committee which was given the express purpose of clarifying all ambiguous points in previous typika.

It is of course not a book for the

everyday reader, since it specialises in the order of all the services celebrated according to the Orthodox Byzantine rite; nevertheless it is of tremendous help for the chanters, priests, deacons, readers and acolytes within a parish who wish to follow the Holy Tradition of the Byzantine Church. The Biolakes Typikon maintains an important place within Orthodoxy since it is a revised version of previous, Byzantine typika. Therefore, whoever is interested in Byzantine Music and the way with which the Orthodox Church celebrates its Sacraments, then this book will enlighten the reader into the practices of Orthodoxy.



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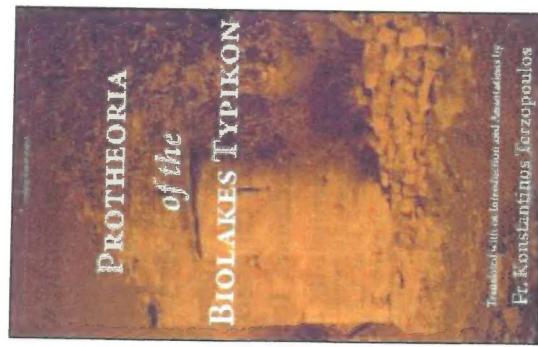
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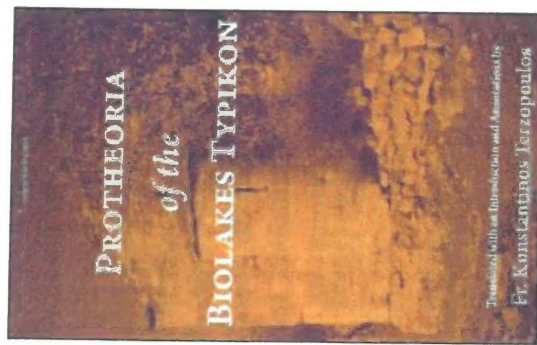
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